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Adventure

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ADVENTURE
Aug. 30th, 1925

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Volume 54
Number 3

The Magic of Print

THE old patent-medicine fakir knew well the magic of print. And the army of quacks who followed him have made use of the same magic. Most men and women accept without question *printed* statements which they might discredit were the same words *spoken*.

You will find quacks trailing along in the wake of every announcement of important medical research, with false claims of their "discoveries", their fake mechanical appliances and special treatments, their "health institutes" and their offers of free diagnosis and treatment by mail.

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Fake-medicine labels are more cautious than they used to be. The U. S. Government, through the Federal Food and Drugs Act, forbids false or misleading statements on the trade package. But this Act does not prohibit lying statements in advertisements, circulars, or window displays.

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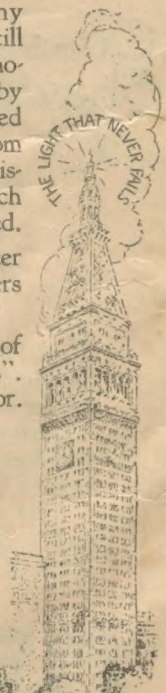
When a cure for tuberculosis or cancer *is* found magazines and newspapers will shout the glorious news.

Do not be deceived by the magic of print. Avoid advertised "cures". If you are sick see your doctor.



Although no specific remedy for the cure of tuberculosis has been found at the time this is written and scientists are working constantly on the problem—there are literally hundreds of nostrums offered to the public as guaranteed cures.

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ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

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The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

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L. PATRICK GREENE

IT SEEMED pretty certain that a man with twenty years' experience in Africa ought to be able to do something about the diamonds in old *Chief Macombe's* forbidden territory when the only white men there to interfere with him were a Christian missionary and a Jewish trader. "THE BLINDNESS OF THE HEATHEN," by L. Patrick Greene, is a complete novelette in the next issue.

THE lure of a possible gold streak was too potent for even *Jake Appodacker's* fixed stolidity, and the multiform dangers of the rugged cañon country could not daunt him in his determination to turn prospector. His unusual experiences are described in "HIDDEN DOLLARS," a complete novelette by Romaine H. Lowdermilk, in the next issue.

FOR three seasons *Ion Korelin* had traded peacefully among the simple savages of the wild Aleutian Archipelago. Then, in the spring of 1775, the fur pirates came into his territory. "THE BERING WOLF," a complete novelette by William Byron Mowery, will appear in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

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Author of "Libertatia," "Plattsburg, 1814," etc.

Prologue

"WELL, men—what do you want?" Captain Lockwood, master and owner of the *Swiftsure*, privateer, clipped his words with stern sharpness. Gray-haired, erect, his deep blue eyes clouding, he searched the sullen faces of his crew from his position on the quarter-deck.

A stir and murmur ran among the ninety rough seamen gathered in the waist. Tom Small, the carpenter, stepped boldly aft.

"Beggin' yer honor's pardon, sir," he began in a voice too elaborately polite. He paused, pulling with deceitful respect at his forelock. "By our reckonin' for'ard, sir, we make it out to be May the tenth."

The year was 1718.

"It is May the tenth," concurred Captain Lockwood curtly.

"Being," pursued Tom, gaining assurance, "six months and one day since we cleared from St. Luke's, and all hands mustered in the waist to hear yer honor read yer commission from Governor Beaseley to cruise against all pirates and freebooters, wherever found—*for the next six months*, sir."

There was sinister emphasis on the last few words, followed by a lifting of furtive faces among the crew—here and there a deep-drawn breath.

"My commission expired yesterday, if that's what you're hinting at Small," Captain Lockwood replied. "And now, men—" his eyes swept the ninety—"you want to know what comes next?"

"Aye aye, sir! That we do!" came the answer in an eager chorus.

"We're homeward bound." The faces of the men darkened. "When we make port,

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you'll get the pay you signed for. Since we've had the bad luck to fall in with no pirates and make no captures, there will be no prize money. That's all."

Again came the murmur of discontent, louder and angrier than before. Tom Small, ringleader and spokesman, judged the time ripe to strike. His respectful manner fell from him. Whirling his big body, taut with energy and purpose, back full to the captain, he faced the men.

"So much for the privateer account!" he shouted, brandishing his carpenter's broadax. "Who's for the grand account?"

A yell of acclamation went up from almost every throat.

Few of the *Swiftsure's* hard-set crew—few back on shore in St. Luke's—had believed John Lockwood's purpose honest, when he had fitted out his vessel at his own expense, avowedly to put down the pirates who, in the almost complete absence of the Royal Navy, infested the Caribbean. It was fresh in every mind that that was how Captain Kidd began; and why should not Lockwood also, embarking as a privateer, slip into the more profitable and glorious career of a pirate when far at sea? In a word, it was generally thought that he was sailing "on the grand account."

A pirate ship was a floating commonwealth, where a strict account was kept of all plunder, each member receiving dividends, besides compensation for wounds and lopped-off limbs, according to a well-known scale. Much the same system prevailed as to prize money on king's ships and privateers; so by way of distinction pirates were said to be on the "grand" account.

The roar that hailed Tom Small's rebellion made plain to Captain Lockwood that most of his crew were ready to strike the red ensign and run up the Jolly Roger. But their cheers died in gasps as their skipper leaped from the quarter-deck like a streak of vengeance. In a flash he vaulted the breast-high barricade at the break of the poop, dropping the height of the tall old-fashioned aftercastle to the waist. The force of the drop left him one moment crouching at the feet of Tom Small, who, despite his name, was the biggest man on board. Up went the carpenter's broadax for a blow that should make him undisputed master of the ship.

Even as it flashed aloft, Lockwood struck upward with his bare, clenched hand. Driven by all the mighty muscles of arm and back and thigh, his hard fist caught the mutineer under the chin, lifted him off his feet, and sent him hurtling through the air. The giant fell flat on his back, with a sickening crunch. There he lay, limp and sprawling, a good two fathoms from where he had stood.

Dumfounded, leaderless, the malcontents huddled in indecision. Before they could act or think, the voice of authority thundered:

"Turn to! Larboard watch below! Starboard watch, man lifts and braces! Lively there! Ready—about!"

Captain Lockwood stood among his men, shouting the familiar commands. Taken at the right moment, the crew responded to long-accustomed habit, dived into forecastle, or ran to their stations for tacking ship.

The white-haired, hoary-bearded first officer, Mr. Williams, thrust a brace of pistols back into his belt. The crisis had come and gone too fast for him to use them. He descended from the poop and wrung the captain's hand.

"Morgan himself couldn't ha' done it better, sir," he declared.

Old "Panama" Williams, as he was called from Cartagena to Madagascar, was a reformed buccaneer, with a vast scorn for the puny, degenerate piracy of the new century. His face, such of it as showed from its bush of crisp white hair, was like crinkled leather. His mustaches turned upward, in disdain of the wild, grizzled beard below, disclosing a long mouth furrowed with many fine upright lines and forever pursed about a pipe. Beard and mustache, for an inch-deep circle about his lips, were burned a rich yellow—some said from nicotine, some said from profanity. Even the hair on his huge, brown, corded hands — strong hands still — was grizzled. His eyes, sunken and puckered with age, glittered far back in his head, with a ferocity heightened by the bushy bunches of hoarfrost which he wore for eyebrows. He took delight in his truculent appearance, and as deep pleasure in acts that belied it. At the present moment, however, he felt as malignant as he looked, and roughly prodded the hard, square toe of his sea-boot into the ribs of the motionless carpenter. Small's eyes were wide open, staring up into the rigging with a heart-chilling vacancy. Panama Williams bent to examine the inert body.

"Dead as Queen Anne," he muttered.

"Dead?" Captain Lockwood echoed. "How can that be?"

"Struck the back of his head on a ring-bolt and stove in his skull, sir."

The skipper gazed, incredulous, at the limp mountain of flesh that had been Tom Small. This he had not meant. He stooped over the body, to assure himself of what he knew was true.

"Something adrift three points off the starboard bow!" sang a hoarse hail from the fore cross-trees. "Looks like a ship's boat, sir."

The captain straightened.

"Take a look through the telescope, Mr. Williams," he directed, and waited beside the dead man for his mate's report.

"Ship's boat it is, sir!" called Panama Williams.

"We'll run down and take a look at it," commanded the skipper.

And while the *Swiftsure* tacked for the derelict, her captain unlaced a tarpaulin from a long-boat and threw it over the body of Tom Small.

As the privateer approached the tiny derelict, they saw that it was indeed a ship's jolly-boat, intact, and neat as new paint could make her. Her stern was toward them, and through the glass the mate made out the words:

William and Mary, Bristol.

THEY brought her up under their lee. There was a man in her, a senseless body rolling from side to side with the sluggish motion of the boat, his shoulders lashed to a thwart to keep him from slipping down and mercifully drowning in the six inches of sea-water washing to and fro on the bottom-boards.

Tenderly as rough men could, they brought him aboard, a wasted skeleton of a man in the last extremity of thirst; eyes burning with fever, a thick, swollen tongue sticking out between cracked lips.

"Take him below and lay him on my bunk," said the skipper. "I'll attend to him myself."

Captain Lockwood followed close behind the bearers of the limp, piteous form. He was laid on the captain's bed and, for the next two hours, captain and castaway were alone together, no one else aboard the *Swiftsure* coming near them. Nor was any one else needed. At the end of that time, the captain came on deck, announced that the man from the open boat had died, and gave orders that both the castaway's body and that of Tom Small should be prepared for burial at sea.

The bodies, decently cleaned and clothed, were arranged side by side on deck. Captain Lockwood read the Church of England

service for the dead over them, and had them committed to the waves. He sent the crew back to their stations, and, turning to Panama Williams, commanded—

"Set a course for Mangrove Key."

Not to any one did he tell what had passed between himself and the castaway during the two hours in his berth.

Two days later they reached that obscure and little-visited island, Mangrove Key. Immediately they made their landfall, the skipper ordered his crew to clear ship for action, and to cast loose and provide the guns. Sullenly and without enthusiasm they shambled to their battle-stations.

As they opened the shallow cove that served for anchorage, there burst upon their vision a large full-rigged ship, riding at anchor in the roadstead. Gun muzzles grinned from her open ports, but she flew no flag.

"A pirate!" ran the murmur along the *Swiftsure's* deck.

The brawlers and bullies and tavern heroes of St. Luke's Town thrilled dully to the pirate, but were without will for attacking her. Having shipped, as they deceived themselves into thinking, on a sham privateersman, they were much more anxious to be sea-robbers themselves and plunder defenceless merchantmen, than to do battle with a cornered and desperate pirate crew.

"Pistol the first man who flinches from his gun," Lockwood instructed his officers, in a voice that carried the length of the ship. As boldly as any admiral he stood straight into the cove.

"Little though we like their looks," he was thinking, "I'll wager they like ours less."

Yet scarcely was he prepared for what followed. Suddenly, without firing a shot, the forty or fifty men aboard the stranger dropped into the boats alongside their ship and pulled for the shore as for dear life. Hurriedly beaching their boats, they scampered across the sand and vanished into the woods. Soon smoke began to pour up out of the hatches of the abandoned vessel.

"Longboat away!" shouted Lockwood. "Mr. Williams take possession of that craft, put out the fires, cut her cables, and get her under way as soon as possible."

"And those runagates ashore?" asked the mate, his upstanding mustaches agitated above his corrugated lips. "Do we land and pursue?"

The skipper shook his head.

"Let them alone," he said. "Our own crew are in too uncertain a temper to risk a pursuit. The best we can do is to save that ship."

The boarding party made quick work of extinguishing the hastily kindled flames, and brought off the prize in short time.

"She's the *William and Mary*, Bristol to Port Royal," said Panama Williams, coming aboard the *Swiftsure* to report. "That poor —— we picked up—he told you?"

"He was her captain," the skipper answered. "A gang of pirates boarded them at night in the Bahama Channel, before the Bristol men, taken by surprize, could fire a shot. They set the captain adrift in that jolly-boat, without oars, sail, or water, to die miserably. After they shoved him off, and while the ship was still in irons, the set of the current brought him back close enough under her stern for him to hear them wrangling about a course for Mangrove Key. He revived just long enough to gasp this out before he died."

"He'll rest easier now," said Panama Williams. "What's next, Captain?"

"Take command of the prize, Mr. Williams, and we'll put back in company to St. Luke's," answered Lockwood.

The course was set for St. Luke's, each of the two ships with a white-haired skipper, conscious of a cruise well-accomplished and a heart filled with longing for home. Even the spirits of the crew lightened as the land came nearer and nearer, though they continued to feel betrayed by the honesty of their skipper, and wanted nothing so much as a chance to get even with the man. Bitterly they mourned Tom Small and what he might have done for them. Great indeed would have been their comfort could they have forseen the strange welcome that awaited Captain Lockwood in St. Luke's harbor.

Part I

CHAPTER I

HIS EXCELLENCY IS ENGAGED

"WHAT the plague d'ye mean, hammering at the governor's door at this late hour? Be off, ye rum-sotted fools, or I'll have ye clapped into the watch-house!"

Old Sawny, his new Excellency's doorkeeper, shuffled his heavy feet across the flagged courtyard of Government House. Governor Beaseley had been recently succeeded by Sir Bellamy Pringle, but no change of authority interrupted Sawny's guardianship of the gates; for half a century he had shuffled and grumbled as importantly for one governor as for another.

Arriving in a quiet that seemed of the grave, after the clamor of the knocking, he peered, blear-eyed but bristling, through the narrow wicket. A small black link-boy, his large awe-filled eyes illumined by his own torch, returned the gaze of the wrathful old man. In vain the porter searched the darkness for accomplices, unable to believe one small fist had made all that noise. The boy had had to pound with all his young might before he could awake the age- and rum-dimmed ears of Old Sawny. Still peering beyond the link-boy, the old man began gradually to discern the outlines of a sedan-chair.

"Is it Miss Lockwood?" he asked, knowing that it was, she being the distinguished owner of the only sedan-chair on St. Luke's, or any other island of the Caribbean, in that day. His manner had become gentle.

The glass-paneled door of the chair opened and the head and shoulders of a slim girl leaned forth into the light of the torch.

Rose Lockwood had her father's deep blue eyes and open steady gaze, suggesting that

she might also have his courage, resourcefulness and ready intelligence. She was the beauty of the island, and fully conscious of her effect on the susceptible Sawny.

"Yes, Sawny, it is I," she replied. "I must see Sir Bellamy at once. Will you please tell his Excellency I am here?"

"'Tis nigh midnight," the gate-keeper demurred, looking, however, as if he would like to obey.

"Yes, I know, Sawny; but the governor is up—we saw lights in the banquet hall as we came along, and in a few hours 'twill be too late. Oh, Sawny, Sawny!" she pleaded. "You know the black hour that has come on me—surely you will not stand in my way? Tell Sir Bellamy I am here. He will see me. He must see me."

"I'll go within, miss, and deliver your request."

Taking into consideration the physical handicaps of the messenger, his absence was short, but to the anxiety-ridden girl it seemed hours before she heard his shuffling feet returning, accompanied by a lighter, firmer tread. Her heart gave a great bound of joy as she caught the rattle of a chain being unhooked and saw one of the huge, nail-studded doors swing open.

A SLENDER, pale young gentleman came forth into the light of the torch and bowed low beside the sedan-chair resting on the cobbles. Rose was cruelly disappointed.

"I crave your pardon, Miss Lockwood," said Stephen Pringle, Sir Bellamy's son.

"Oh, do call me Rose," implored the owner of the name, not knowing just how to begin with Stephen. Her troubled eyes searched his face.

She was always trying to shatter the young man's formality, and just now, in her distress, it seemed more than she could stand. Stephen's formality, however, was more than a mere fashionable veneer of the time. It was the armor in which he clothed a natural shyness, which the seclusions of a long illness in adolescence and his studious habits since had greatly increased. All the girls of St. Luke's found him difficult; but to their mothers he was "that modest and exemplary young man."

Rose and Stephen knew each other well; had played together during long summers in England, whither her mother had taken her to school, and where her father used to come to see them in his ship, and sometimes bring them back to St. Luke's with him. One sad summer her mother had died in that far land, and neither she nor her father had gone there again.

"Miss—Rose," compromised Stephen at length, and that for him was great boldness, "I regret that you have been put to the indignity of waiting out here in the public square. I regret, too, to have to tell you that his Excellency is engaged, and will see no one tonight. But, Miss Lockwood—" the beautiful lady in the sedan-chair was so vaguely the little girl he had played with that she had quite slipped away from him again. Nevertheless, she stirred some emotion in his unguessed warmth of being, and his voice all but trembled in boyish sympathy as he spoke on— "If there is any message I could take, or aught else I could do, I should be happy to serve you."

"But I must, I must see Sir Bellamy, Stephen. There is something I must tell him, now, the first minute I can get to him. It is my father's life or death. Go to him, Stephen, please, and tell him he must see me."

"His Excellency left word he could see no one. He is closeted with members of the council."

"The council!" The girl shuddered. "I will not see them," she said hotly, "now or ever!"

"But cannot you convey your message by me?" asked the governor's son

Rose concentrated all her wits on the problem, and in a few moments replied, "yes; but I cannot speak my message out here in the marketplace."

"Would you be willing—to—to come into my study?" faltered Stephen. "It is just inside the gates."

Never before had a lady been in that room, and its lord was feeling uncomfortably like a Don Juan.

Rose smiled to herself at his hardly concealed embarrassment, liking him because he was so little conscious that one look at his face would reassure any girl. She motioned to the link-boy, who put out his torch by grinding its head into a big iron extinguisher built into the gate-post. Two brawny blacks, giants in stature, who had been standing in the shadow on the far side of the gates, obeyed another gesture from their mistress by coming forward, picking

up the sedan-chair, and trudging along with it in Stephen's wake. When they had set it down inside the study, they opened the door and raised the hinged roof so their mistress could rise and step out. Then they were dismissed and vanished with the link-boy in the direction of the kitchens.

"Please be seated, Miss Lockwood," Stephen begged, with a most respectful bow.

But Rose paid no heed. She stood staring through one of the study windows, its hangings looped back, at a row of lighted windows across the courtyard around which the sprawling, one-story Spanish palace was built. The windows were half screened by the palms outlining the patio, but through them she could see plainly enough into the banquet hall of Government House. A merry party of gentlemen sat around a long table covered with shining damask. In the center stood a huge bowl of orchids. On a stand against the wall stood a larger bowl filled with punch, and a black slave was ladling it out into silver beakers resting on a tray held by another black. At the head of the table sat a man of imposing stature, with a full, red, jovial face—Sir Bellamy Pringle, the newly installed governor of the Crown Colony of St. Luke's. He had just concluded a speech in a rich, subdued voice, not even a murmur of which reached across the court. He sat down amid laughter, which came gaily across to Stephen and Rose. Rose's eyes flashed sparks of anger. Was it business like this that was so sacred it could not be interrupted by a girl who had come to plead her father's innocence of a false charge that would claim his life in a few hours?

" 'His Excellency is engaged,' " said Rose bitterly, quoting Stephen; but she kept her eyes riveted on the bright windows across the way.

The laughter had not died out, had only become less riotous, when the governor again rose in his place and, with a flourish of his silver mug, began to sing. Across the echoing patio rolled the mellow music of his deep bass:

"Here's a health to the King and a lawful peace,
To faction an end, and to wealth increase;
Come, let's drink it down while yet we have breath,
For there's no drinking after death.
And he that will this toast deny,
Down among the dead men,
Down among the dead men,
Down, down, down, down,
Down among the dead men let him lie!"

Rose gave a smothered cry, like one in terror, and turned from the window. She sank into the heavy chair before Stephen's desk, the only chair in the room, holding her hands over her eyes as if to shut out a fearful vision.

"Down, down, down, down,
Down among the dead men let him lie!"

swelled the chorus.

For the first time John Lockwood's daughter realized her helplessness, and her high courage ebbed from her. These men, the powerful ones of St. Luke's, had resolved to send her father down, down, down among the dead men. Laying her head on the hard desk, she sobbed heart-brokenly.

Stephen Pringle was miserable and would have done anything, anything, to stop the unconscious brutality of the singers, if anything at all had occurred to him that could have stopped them. Through the lilt of the roaring chorus, he listened to her sobs and a deep pity filled him.

"They—they do not know you are here," he stammered. "Old Sawny dared not enter the hall after my father's orders. He came to me instead."

The girl ceased sobbing and raised her head:

" 'His Excellency is engaged,' " she quoted again, with immeasurable scorn.

"But truly," His Excellency's loyal son protested, "my father has been holding a most serious and important conference. When it was over, I came here to work upon my papers." He was his father's secretary. "They had not even begun to sing," he reminded her, "when Old Sawny came here and told me you were without."

"As members of the Vice-Admiralty Court—that tried—after its way—and condemned—my father," Rose said, in a voice heavy with tears, "the Governor and Council are supposed to be present—at his— Oh, God in Heaven!" she moaned, "how can they sing? how can they?"

Since they must be present at the condemned man's execution, Rose had guessed that, rather than go to bed and have to get up and dress before dawn, they preferred to make a night of it.

That they should pass the time in drink and song while they waited for the dawn and a man's death was ghastly to the sensitive Stephen, too; though, except for Rose's

presence, he should have been busy with his notes and paying little heed.

The girl was listening to them again, to these merry gentlemen who, less than twelve hours before, had sentenced her father, Captain John Lockwood, on a charge of piracy, to be taken to Gallows Point at break of day, there to be hanged by the neck till he was dead—dead—dead. As she listened, she looked at Stephen with brilliant, tear-washed eyes that almost frightened him.

CHAPTER II

A NEW USE FOR A SEDAN-CHAIR

Down among the dead men,
Down among the dead men—

ROSE stood up and regarded Stephen coldly. Her purpose seemed renewed by the flood of tears.

"His Excellency's serious business being apparently finished," she said, "will you have the goodness, Mr. Pringle, kindly to tell him that Captain Lockwood's daughter wishes to see him?"

"You desire to ask the governor for a reprieve?"

"Yes."

Stephen looked at her sorrowfully.

"My father's mind is made up," he told her. "I dare not disobey his express command. He has sworn he will see no one who comes to ask for a reprieve for Captain Lockwood. He has published this resolve, and having made it public, is the less likely to depart from it."

"But why should he refuse? What right has he?" demanded Rose. "I do not seek a pardon—my father is not guilty. It is only a postponement of the sentence I ask. Is not my father safe in the watch-house, with half the town guard under arms about the door? How can he possibly escape? A month's delay is all I ask, or even less, just time to get together the witnesses in whose absence my father was condemned. Any day, any hour, may bring word of the *William and Mary's* crew, or of the pirates who took their ship."

Stephen was silent.

"Do *you* think my father guilty?" the girl asked suddenly.

"The *William and Mary* was an honest ship," replied the honest Stephen, slowly, "and your—and Captain Lockwood's commission had expired when he attacked her. Also, he confessed to the killing of Tom Small, the carpenter."

"But Small was the ringleader of a mutiny," Rose exclaimed, "and the *William and Mary* was in the hands of rogues. Had not my father acted as he did, there would be two more pirate ships cruising on the account, instead of an innocent man condemned to die. And now these wretches whom he kept from turning pirates have sworn in court that he had turned pirate himself!"

For a moment a great weariness came into her face, but she rallied.

"It will be a glad day for the pirates when John Lockwood is no more." A sob threatened her speech. "They hate him! They fear him! He is their worst enemy. It was revenge that made my father's crew swear he had wantonly attacked Tom Small with a belaying-pin; cunningly they swore he killed Small because Small, forsooth, as their leader, objected to attacking an English ship. My dear father! And, save his bare word, what proof could he give that he knew there were pirates on the *William and Mary*, or that the men who fled from her were not her own lawful crew? When the court refused the testimony of Mr. Williams and the other honest men aboard the *Swiftsure*, holding them unduly prejudiced in my father's favor?"

"We could not overlook the fact," Stephen replied, "that they were, without exception, Captain Lockwood's tenants or debtors, or men whom he had brought out from England as indentured servants, and freed before their time, or otherwise befriended."

The trial had been skilfully managed by the prosecution, and Stephen had been their clerk and recorder.

"Yet you believed his crew, the would-be pirates whom you knew had good cause to hate and fear him!" accused the girl, identifying Stephen with her enemies. "You would not let him be tried by a jury of his peers, the right of every Englishman."

"But that is the very reason why these new Vice-Admiralty Courts have been created," Stephen explained; "because it has been impossible to find a jury that would convict any one accused of piracy. There are too many persons on these islands who secretly deal with and help the pirates."

"Yes!" flashed Rose, "and there again the villainy comes out." She went over to him,

laid her hands on his shoulders, and looked steadily into his eyes. "And do you know who they are who deal with and help the pirates? Not the poor folk who are glad to take an anker of rum or a Sheffield knife and give a shut tongue and a friendly eye in return. Their corruption could not maintain one pirate. No—'tis certain rich men, planters and merchants on St. Luke's, men whose fields are tilled by slaves and whose warehouses are crammed with goods that come—slaves and goods—no man can say from where. Fine gentlemen all, pious churchmen, yet good livers and jolly companions, fit company for even His Majesty's governor."

Stephen was startled. "What do you mean, Miss Lockwood?"

Rose went to a window and silently pointed across the patio at one after another of the councillors sitting around the governor's table.

"But this is monstrous!" declared Stephen. "This passes all belief. Your grief, Miss Lockwood—" he checked himself on words that would have questioned her sanity.

"On the contrary, Stephen." She had shed her coldness. "I know what you would say, but it is my grief that has opened my eyes to what I never saw before, though I have lived here all my life. Those loyal gentlemen of the council are the self-same men who in the old days, when St. Luke's thrived on piracy and none thought shame of it, openly bid for captured cargoes on Galleon Beach!"

Stephen was dumb, considering how natural it was that she should be biased by her hard experience of the last week.

"What do you and your father, fresh from England, know of these islands and their ways?" questioned Rose Lockwood. "Let me but speak with Sir Bellamy apart, let me tell him some of the things I know about those who condemned my father and are hurrying him to his death! Then—then—he can not refuse a reprieve."

"He has already refused," said Stephen. "Sir Bellamy is the kindliest and most jovial of men, but a threat turns him to iron."

"And who threatens? I come to plead."

"Certain of your father's friends sent word, but a few hours since, that if a stay of execution was not granted they would take matters into their own hands. Were the governor to yield now, it would seem that he did so out of fear."

"I knew nothing of this!" Rose exclaimed, in great alarm.

What could she do? If her father's friends "took matters into their own hands," what would happen? Almost certainly an attack on the watch-house that night or on the sheriff's party at dawn. Forewarned, the authorities could in all probability beat it off. And even if the attempt were successful and her father set free, he would then be an outlaw. Surely there must be some better way.

Then her sharpened brain conceived a scheme—grotesque, audacious, yet full of promise. She leaned against the window-frame, gazing at Stephen with bright eyes, the while he wondered at what thoughts occupied her mind. She was observing that he was not greatly taller than she, and slender, puny even, and pale, from lack of exercise and long indoor hours with books and writing.

"I fear you are right, Mr. Pringle," the girl said at last, and her voice was very gentle and resigned. "You are a man and know best."

Stephen stirred uneasily; the words were so out of character, though his vanity was vaguely puffed by them. Poor girl! At last she was broken by the terrible strain.

"I will trouble you only a moment longer," Rose said in a dull tone. "Would you be willing to put down in writing for me a brief message to Sir Bellamy?" Her fingers absently worked about the knot of the red-silk rope looping back the velvet curtain; she drooped, with a little sigh, against the curtain's soft folds.

"I should be most happy to serve you, Miss Lockwood."

Stephen seated himself at his table, where a solitary candle burned like a lighthouse amid a sea of papers. His one chair was a ponderous old piece of carved Spanish oak, much too big for Stephen.

Rose came up behind him.

"Dear Mr. Pringle," she said, "do take off that great wig and that hot coat. Why men will wear such things in this climate, I can't imagine." She spoke softly, a little sob or two catching in her throat, that her distress might not be forgotten. They came easily enough, Heaven knew. Bending over him, she lifted the stifling mass of curled horse-hair from his head, laid it on the

desk, and with almost caressing hands helped him off with his coat.

Stephen was deeply affected. Not since his mother died, had a woman been so sweet and gentle to him. He thought:

"Her father a condemned pirate! What will become of her after tomorrow?"

WITH fingers that trembled a little the young man selected a clean sheet of paper, dipped his quill, and waited for the message. No word from Rose, but on the instant a rope flashed past his eyes and was now binding both his arms tightly to his sides! Stupidly he looked down and saw a dusty red-silk cord encircling his waist, and recognized it. It was one of the tasseled cords, an inch thich and a yard long, used to tie back the curtains at his study windows. Amazed, incredulous even as he struggled against the rope, he comprehended that the girl had thrown the noose about him and drawn it tight, that she had bound him in his chair. Why, in the name of all sanity? Ah! Was she, then, crazed?

He tried to rise, but could not. Her fingers had knotted the ends of the silk rope to a rung beyond his reach. Behind him, he could hear her breathing hard with exertion and excitement. Then he heard a mysterious rustling and ripping.

"Really!" he protested, with a sound that was half-way between angry sputter and silly giggle—not knowing whether to laugh or storm. "If you do not untie me at once, Miss Lockwood, I—"

He said no more, for the sufficient reason that a wad of cloth was popped into his open mouth and secured there, with a strip torn from the edge of a petticoat, and tied behind his head. Unable to cry out, he tried with all his strength to free his arms from the cord about his waist.

His left arm was almost free, when a second curtain-cord was made fast to his wrist and then belayed to the fiddle back of the chair. His right arm, still pinioned at the elbow, was an easy prey, and soon both his wrists were drawn together and bound behind his back. This done, the girl left him, and ran to the next window for more rope.

Now Stephen saw a chance to escape. If he could not leave the chair, at least he could take it with him. Shoving it back from the desk, he rose to his feet and started for the door as fast as a man so harnessed could move.

He heard a gasp of alarm and swift footsteps pattering in pursuit. Bent half double, with the edge of the chair seat knocking against the back of his knees, Stephen made poor speed. The chair was, besides, unbelievably heavy. The girl overtook him before he was halfway to the door.

Two tall knobs rose from the corners of the high back of the chair. Grasping these, Rose placed one foot on the lowest rung between the back legs and pulled with all her strength, at the same time lifting her other foot from the floor. This combination of weight and leverage was irresistible. Down thumped the chair, all four feet firmly planted on the tile floor. Then—Stephen would have gasped behind the gag if he'd had any breath left—the front legs of the chair tipped up, as the girl still tugged at the knobs, and over it went backward, Rose using her strength now to keep it from hitting the tiles with too hard a thud and hurting its occupant.

Flat on his back, with only his legs free, Stephen kicked frantically till his high-heeled pumps flew across the room. But his wily captor wasted no time trying to catch and hold his twinkling silken ankles. Instead, watching her opportunity, she passed a cord under his knees, made a noose of it, and drew it inch by inch down the silk-stockinged calves till the legs were bound together and lashed firmly to the chair.

Her breast rising and falling with her activity, her long golden-brown hair tumbling about her shoulders, her eyes sparkling, she stood looking down at the bound and helpless son of the governor of St. Luke's.

"I am sorry to have to serve you so, Mr. Pringle," she said; then picked up the Ramillies wig and the lighted candle from the desk, carried them into Stephen's bedroom, opening off the study, and closed and locked the door.

Left alone in the dark Stephen tried furiously to free himself. At the end of the worst half-hour he had ever spent his shirt was soaked with sweat, his wrists and ankles were rubbed raw, his jaws were aching, his throat sore because of futile, involuntary efforts at sound—and his bonds and gag were as secure as ever. Had he but known it, there was no sailor in all the

Caribbean who could have knotted them better than the daughter of the "condemned pirate."

Stephen had ceased to struggle and was limp on his back in the overturned chair when the door of the bedroom opened, and on the threshold, in the candle light, stood a fashionably dressed young gentleman. For a second, his heart bounding with joy, Stephen thought it was one of his father's guests. Then the figure stepped into the study, candle in hand, and he saw it was Rose Lockwood wearing one of his best, but not his newest, suits. The blue satin and silver lace set off her complexion to advantage, and her beautiful face, framed in the great full-bottomed wig, appeared no more effeminate than that of many a gallant of the time. And she carried herself with an assured and convincing air. She had chosen the blue and silver, because Stephen in that suit was a familiar figure, and she hoped to be taken for Stephen should she chance to meet any one on her way back to her father's house. It was not likely, however, at this hour, that any one who knew either of them would be abroad.

Placing the candle on the desk, she crossed to the door opening on the courtyard and clapped her hands three times. Separating themselves from the darkness, twin black giants, the chairmen David and Jonathan, followed by little Bob the link-boy, came running forward and entered the room. The three stopped and stared at the sight of their master's daughter in male attire, and at the bound man on the floor.

"Make no sound," cautioned their mistress in a whisper. "Would you win your freedom and save my father's life?" she demanded, searching the eyes of each in turn.

"Yes, yes, missey," chorused the slaves, in whispers.

"Stand by me tonight and you shall be given your freedom," she promised them. The slaves stood ready to her commands.

Drawing her sword—Stephen's silver-hilted small-sword—Rose cut the cords that bound Stephen to the chair, leaving intact those that bound just his arms and legs.

"Pick him up," she said to the giant David, "and place him in my sedan-chair."

As easily as he would have handled a child of two, David deposited the mute and helpless Stephen in the sedan.

"Bob, fetch the bundle of my things from the bed in the other room and put them on the gentleman's lap. Jonathan, pick up that chair and take it over to the table."

Sitting in the chair, Rose dipped Stephen's quill into the ink and, with outward composure, wrote and sanded a brief note. She pinned the note to one of the crimson velvet curtains, where it shone out like a white flag.

"Shall I light my torch, missey?" asked Bob.

"No," answered Rose, decisively. "Draw the curtains of the sedan, let down the roof, in staves and follow me!"

She blew out the candle, walked to the door, and peered out into the dim courtyard. It was still deserted, the drinking party across the way still in full swing. Rose saw Sir Bellamy get to his feet again, melodiously proclaiming:

> "Let charming beauty's health go round,
> In whom celestial joys are found,
> And may confusion still pursue
> The senseless woman-hating crew!
> And they that woman's health deny
> Down among the dead men let them lie.
> Down, down, down, down—"

But the gentlemen in the brightly lighted, noisy room could neither see nor hear Rose Lockwood and her retinue as they passed along the arched colonnade which let around the patio and connected with the palace gate.

Old Sawny, roused by the shuffling feet, came blinking out of his lodge, lantern in hand. He had been waiting for Miss Lockwood's reappearance so long he had almost fallen asleep again. He found, waiting for him to unbar the gate the sedan bearers, the sedan—within which Sawny visioned a beautiful young lady too grief-stricken by the failure of her mission to show her face—the link-boy, and a gentleman whose face the porter could not see well in the flickering light because the gentleman happened to be fanning himself with his three-cornered hat. But he had no need to see the face, he was familiar with the blue and silver suit.

"Good night, Sawny. Mr. Pringle is seeing me home."

"Good night, miss," said Old Sawny, throwing open the gates. He knew Miss Lockwood's voice as well as anybody. In the dark, echoing archway her words, low-pitched and slightly hoarse, with weeping Sawny surmised quite correctly, had seemed to come from behind the closed and curtained windows of the sedan-chair.

CHAPTER III

THE FALL AND CLINK OF SWORDS

THE old Spanish plaza of St. Luke's Town was dim and deserted under the starlight. The flat-roofed, rambling houses around it drowsed behind their lines and groups of palms. A single venerable laurel tree in the center of the square sent its branches far across the cobbles, and so low were they here and there a tall man could scarcely walk upright under them. Rose Lockwood and her little cavalcade, crossing the open space cautiously, almost noiselessly, had reached the sleeping laurel—not the faintest stir among its leaves—when—

"H-halt! Who goes there?" challenged a nervous voice from among its shadows.

The girl halted, but, struck dumb with sudden fright, was unable to answer the challenge. She had not counted on being stopped like this in the center of the public square, there having been no sentry here when she passed before, on her way to Government House. Scarce had she recovered from the tension of her daring in taking the Governor's son prisoner and smuggling him past Old Sawny, and the new-met, uncalculated danger paralyzed her vocal cords. She could say nothing, think of nothing, save that she was discovered and all was lost; her hostage would be taken from her, and she herself, if the law followed its course, would be outlawed.

"Halt!" commanded the sentry again, though Rose was standing as one rooted to the cobbles, and her three slaves were rigid and still. "T-tell me w-who you are, or I'll f-fire!"

By his quavering tones, he was badly frightened himself, and therefore doubly dangerous to every one within range. The girl's eye caught the faint gleam of starlight on the barrel of a musket as it was brought to aim.

Then she saw the stubby bulk of another dark figure take form beside that of the sentinel, and heard the rumbling voice of Captain Cary Tompkins, commander of the Town Guard:

"Recover your firelock, Wilkes!" it said. "Pass, Mr. Pringle and party. Stap me, but 'tis lucky I was making my rounds, else you might well have had a bullet through your vitals!"

With the chairmen following alongside, Rose advanced till she was close enough to the fat little militia captain to look down on the expanse of his broad cockaded hat, as he clapped it back on his head after a ceremonious bow to Stephen Pringle's blue and silver suit and modish wig.

"Mr. Pringle, your most obedient," he said. "Don't tell me," he whispered, glancing significantly at the sedan, "that Sir Bellamy has changed his mind and granted a reprieve?" Stephen Pringle as Rose Lockwood's escort—no one but Rose could be in the sedan—suggested to the captain's active mind that the pirate's daughter was returning from an embassy to the Governor. The form of his question showed that he did not really believe in the success of the embassy. The prosecution had been too determined.

The wearer of the blue and silver shook her head, and the militiaman breathed heavily, as if relieved. She was again fanning her face with Stephen's cocked hat, and it never left her features entirely uncovered. The precaution was hardly needed under the deep shadows of the laurel.

" 'Tis wise," said the captain. "Best to get these desperate wretches safely out of the way—without delay." He stepped out of the path with the advice. "Get the poor wench home to her father's town house and get yourself back within the gates of Government House before the storm breaks. We're expecting wild work tonight in St. Luke's Town, Mr. Pringle."

But Rose must know more. She summoned the hardihood to cough slightly, as if from a cold, and to ask in a low, husky voice:

"An attack on the watch-house?"

" 'Tis sure. One of Justice Price's spies was in but now with word that a hundred stout rogues were assembled at the Flanders Tavern, under that villain, Panama Williams. They are desperate, and plan to storm the watch-house and set Lockwood free. They have even a petard to blow in the door. Little do they think how close a watch we're keeping on them. We have fifty fusileers from the fort, ready and waiting up there on the watch-house roof," whispered Tompkins, who was always garrulous when he had an opportunity to talk to persons in high places, and he nodded his head toward the flat, parapeted top of the old Spanish jail on the far side of the square.

"My lads will fire a shot and fall back," he ran on, "leaving the real sport to the

redcoats. 'Twill be rare! Well—I must look to my other sentries. Pass with your pretty pirate wench, Mr. Pringle, and good night."

"Good night, Captain Tompkins," replied Rose, in a husky whisper.

She had recovered from her fright and stepped forward briskly. Every moment she lingered in St. Luke's Town increased her danger and diminished her chance of saving her father's life. But he must also be saved from his friends' ill-advised plan to rescue him from the jail. How to get word to Panama Williams that she held Stephen Pringle as hostage for her father's safety? There was no time to lose before getting her prisoner out of the city and safe within Lockwood Hall before the abduction should be discovered. There was many a gap in the crumbling palisades through which she could reach the highroad without passing the guard-house at the gate.

On the other hand, to walk down into the rougher quarters of the town to the Flanders Tavern, with a sedan-chair, would be to court the attention of every night-prowler and run the risk of recognition and discovery. Yet, she considered, she could not abandon the men who were risking their lives, however lawlessly and mistakenly, to save her father from the gallows. They must be warned of the ambush laid for them at the watch-house. Cost what it might, she must get word to that "villain Panama Williams."

The ex-buccaneer, a man of peace since he had received the King's pardon, had settled down on St. Luke's, and seldom spoke of his former rovings, except when his little playmate, John Lockwood's wee daughter, demanded another story. Then he would tell such wondrous tales, the while he whittled out toy ships and wooden cutlasses for her to play with, that the tiny maid would burst into tears because she would never be a man and could never go adventuring. And now here she was—alas, for the cause!—wearing man's attire and running a man's risk and more, as she walked down the dark, narrow streets, lighted only by the strip of stars visible between the overshadowing eaves and jutting balconies of the closely shut houses on either side. She had taken and bound the governor's son with her own hands, she had carried him off beneath his father's eyes and the noses of the Town Guard—she had made herself an outlaw that she might save her father and her father's friends from outlawry or death.

The air grew saltier. She was nearing the waterfront and the Flanders Tavern. Suddenly she heard men running toward her as fast as they could put foot to the ground.

Soon she could make out their figures approaching through the shadows made by the houses. First came a man in light-colored clothes, and then a little group of two or three. The leader checked his speed, seeming alarmed or puzzled by the strange shape of the dimly seen sedan.

"Ahoy there!" he hailed, but in a subdued tone, as if he feared to wake the houses. "Who be ye, a-blockin' of the fairway?"

"Are you from the Flanders Tavern?" asked the slender person in blue and silver, in a masculine heaviness of tone.

"Aye—and what if we be?"

"Go back and tell Panama Williams that he is betrayed! The soldiers from the fort are at the watch-house. Go! Warn the rest to disperse, and say to Williams that one awaits him here with a message."

But the man did not go back. Instead he stood his ground and, head close to the heads of the others, talked to them in hissing whispers. Rose saw there were four of them, and the three behind were listening to the one who had spoken to her and who was now pointing his finger at her.

At a low, vicious laugh from among them, she turned cold with terror. There was an evil tone to their mirth. It flashed over her that these men knew who she was and meant her ill. Perhaps one of them had recognized the sedan-chair. The four began to move silently toward her.

"Go back!" she cried desperately. "Go back, and tell Mr. Williams!"

"Never you mind old Williams, my pretty lass," chuckled the man in dirty white, evilly. "You come along o' we."

HE STARTED a raucous laugh, but it died on his lips, as the flashing figure in blue and silver came charging at him, lunging at his throat with a drawn sword and calling:

"David! Jonathan! Out staves, and to me!"

Instantly the ruffian's own hand clapped to the hilt of his cutlass. He whipped out his blade and parried the girl's thrust in time to save his life but not his looks. The

point of the small sword, as the cutlass struck it up, slashed his face open from chin to hair-line.

"Get behind the cursed wench and disarm her!" he shouted to his followers, roaring with rage and pain.

The three ran forward, dodging out to the right and left to outflank and surround her. Instead they plumped into two huge Africans, eager for battle and wielding nine-foot war clubs. Liveried house slaves though they were, David and Jonathan were warriors born. Not even the horrors of the slaver's 'tween-decks had broken their strength or their fighting spirit, and their master's daughter had promised them their freedom if they stood by her tonight. Yelling their tribal war-cry, they bounded past her and smote her foes.

The man whom David hit dropped like Goliath. Jonathan's mighty stave beat down a guarding cutlass blade and stretched its owner senseless on the cobbles. Back down the street fled the third fellow, running for his life, with two vengeful black demons close behind, in the heat of the chase forgetful of their mistress, who was still hotly engaged in sword-play with the man in white.

When David and Jonathan had set down the sedan, the hand of one had slipped, tilting the chair so that the curtain slid back enough to permit Stephen to see what went on in the street. He saw the brute with whom Rose fought, cut and slash savagely with his broad, heavy blade, regardless of the sex of his opponent. The wound in his face had been fatal to what little chivalry there might have been in him. He was fighting with this girl exactly as if she had been a man, and he was a brawny seaman who knew how to use a cutlass.

Well it was for Rose Lockwood that her father was master of the small-sword and had taught her to fence. But this was no foil-play. She parried with the swift skill that her father's training had made instinctive, wasting no strength in meeting her brutal antagonist's wide slashes full, but turning them aside with the deft evasions for which the small-sword was designed. Yet with all her lithe cunning she was no match in muscle or weight for her adversary. Her wrist was soon aching, her fingers growing numb. She breathed in gasps. Stephen watched her strength ebb with an agony greater than he had fancied any one could feel. He realized her defeat would mean his release, but he did not want release at that price. Rose had pinked her foe's arm and shoulder, but the pricks only enraged him the more, and rage seemed to increase his strength. A moment more, and her weary sinews must relax, her guard fall. If one of his blows should strike home!

She shuddered and grew cold at the thought of the sharp steel shearing through her living body.

Feeling her blade tremble against his, the man knew her short resistance was almost over. He disengaged and heaved his cutlass high for a final blow. Before he could bring it down, the girl flung herself forward in a last, desperate lunge for his throat. Barely quick enough to save himself a second time, the seaman sprang back with a savage growl. His heel came down on the outstretched arm of one of his fallen comrades, laid low by David; his ankle turned, and with a ripping curse he fell in a huddle on the rough pavement.

Rose's glimmering point was instantly under his chin, and gradually she forced him flat on his back, her blade tickling his throat. She stood over him, panting, her foot on his chest, holding her sword with fine precision, despite her exhaustion.

"Lie still," she breathed, "or I will pin you to the ground."

The fellow did not stir.

Keeping her eyes on his face—she did not dare look aside an instant—Rose called on her slaves:

"Jonathan! David! Come back! Come here at once!"

But the black giants had vanished into the night, beyond reach of her weary voice. She was without any one to help her now. She stood, a worthless prisoner on her hands—or rather, under her foot; in her sedan-chair, a valuable prisoner whom any chance of the passing moments might release. Where were those black guardians?

"David! Jonathan!"

Who was the brute under her foot, and why had he attacked her? What if the two who lay beside him should recover their senses, or if some one else should come?

"David! David! Jonathan!"

The people in the houses on either hand began to move about and unbar the shutters. In panic, Rose deplored that she had so lost her head as to shout like that. The neighborhood would soon be swarming

about her. She blinked the tears from her eyes, but her delicate pressure of sword-point at the throat of her prostrate foe kept its steadiness.

Then came a terrifying sound: The pound and clatter of many feet running together up from the waterfront. It kept the frightened inmates of the houses behind their barred doors, but a few of the bolder ones ran out on the second-story balconies to see what was happening. One hardy spirit leaned far over the railing, a pitch-pine torch blazing in his hand.

By the sudden lurid glare, Rose saw a great throng of fierce-looking men in rough sea-clothes charging toward her with drawn cutlasses, but without making the slightest outcry. It was horrible as a nightmare.

Who were these men? In appearance they were exactly like the four she and her slaves had beaten off. The one who ran away had perhaps succeeded in reaching them, telling a great tale of her—maybe they thought she was a witch, that they came so many against one frail girl.

Nearer and nearer they came in their fearful silence. She lifted her free arm imperiously and called:

"Stand back! Advance another step and I kill your comrade who lies here at my mercy!"

"Save him for me to deal with!" answered the grim voice of Panama Williams.

CHAPTER IV

BENEATH THE GALLOWS TREE

"GOOD morning, Mr. Pringle. You have passed a pleasant night, I hope?"

So spoke the lady of Lockwood Hall from her place at the breakfast table beside the tall silver tea urn. Charming and stately she looked, her gold-brown curls confined high on her head by a crushed band of rose satin. Her eyes were very blue and dark. A smile played about her lips—a kindly, friendly smile, designed to put her prisoner-guest at his ease.

Stephen advanced to the table, after a rather painful bow to Rose. With a passably successful attempt at the young gentlemanly grace of the time, he sank into the chair she indicated. His muscles were still sore and stiff, and as he recalled his "pleasant night" he was indignant.

Bound and cramped in that infernal sedan-chair, he had been carried by relays of amateur bearers of most uneven skill, out through a breach in the town palisades and over seven miles of rough coast road to Lockwood Hall. Why he had not been plunged headlong through the glass of the doors, he did not know—no ship in a hurricane could have up-tilted more than that sedan. He was sore from his bumpings, sore from his gag, sore from the tight cords of red silk that had bound his limbs.

And at Lockwood Hall he was given Panama Williams for a room-mate. The main objection to Panama Williams was that he was such a perfect watchman. The old fellow had been kind enough.

"I'll cast off your lashings and ease your limbs and jaw-tackle on one condition, my lad," he had said, as soon as they were alone in the room; "and that is, that you go to bed and to sleep without a word. Otherwise, bound and gagged you stay. Is it a bargain?"

Stephen had nodded an agreement, whereupon the ex-buccaneer loosed the knots even faster than Rose had tied them. Then, putting the door key in his breeches pocket, he had sat down in a chair, tilted its back against the door, folded his brawny arms across his hairy chest, and settled himself for what was left of the night.

Through sleepless, aching hours, Stephen turned from side to side in his comfortable bed, rubbing his chafed wrists and ankles, and thinking of the many things he would say to a certain misguided young woman when next he saw her. She had laid herself open to dire consequences from the law in kidnaping him, but Stephen did not want her punished in that way. Besides, he ardently hoped the story of her exploits, insofar as they touched him, would not get abroad. He fumed and twisted and thought till finally the regular boom of the breakers at the foot of the cliff directly below his window lulled him to sleep.

When he wakened, it was broad daylight. Panama Williams had vanished. At his bedside stood David—or was it Jonathan?—towel on one arm and razor in hand.

"Miss Lockwood's compliments, suh, an' brekfus' will be served right soon."

Stephen's downy beard was soon disposed of, after which the black giant helped him into the blue and silver London suit and a pair of shoes the slender-footed Stephen

rattled around in—probably a pair of Captain Lockwood's. The staircase proved a way of pain, seeing which the black had picked him up bodily and carried him down—much to Stephen's disgust; but he was glad he had not carried him into the presence of Rose, a thing he had feared would happen.

"How do you take your tea, Mr. Pringle? Weak or strong?"

"Strong!" he answered with dignity, though in truth he loathed strong tea, and had been taught to avoid it as bad for his weak heart and nerves, which he had been brought up to regard as "vastly delicate." But he was in a state of mind when men do desperate things.

Stephen looked at his abductor, trying hard to recall some of the salutary things he had meant to say to her. But her sweetness, her daintiness, something queenly about her, disarmed reproof. It even seemed she could not be the bold abductor of the night before.

Rose wore what was called "an elegant morning jacket," though it came almost to the bottom of her ruffled petticoats. Stephen observed her small wrists, soft like satin, as the deep lace edging her sleeves fell back with the upward motion of her hands toward the tea urn. She drew his tea. Her hands—supple, gentle, assured—handled the delicate china in exactly the same manner they had used to lift the wig from his hot head a few hours before. Could that little hand, hovering over the sugar tongs, have plied a sword against ruffians in a midnight brawl?

"How much sugar, Mr. Pringle?"

"None."

Rose opened her eyes full on him. "But—I thought you always liked things very sweet! As a little boy—"

"No sugar, please."

"I trust you found Mr. Williams an agreeable room-fellow," pursued Rose, conversationally, while Jonathan—or was it David?—passed the tea. "I could have given you a room to yourself, but you understand—"

"I understand you had him there to mount guard and prevent my escape from this house, where it pleases you to detain me unlawfully."

"Dear me!" murmured Rose, helplessly, and sighed. "Mr. Williams must act as your host in the absence of my father."

Her father! Her father was to have been hanged at dawn! Stephen's jaw dropped. His teacup was on the way to his lips. Attempting to return it to the saucer, he miscalculated in his emotion and knocked it against the edge of the table. The thin china broke, drenching his blue satin thighs with strong tea.

"Oh!" exclaimed Rose, springing up and rushing to the rescue. Stephen's napkin had fallen to the floor; she offered him hers to mop up the rapidly spreading tea. "Your brave suit of blue and silver!" she mourned. "'Twas the most becoming thing I ever wore. I shed salt tears at sending it back to you this morning, and now 'tis ruined past redemption. There—you can do no more, I fear. 'Tis ruined. But do sit down and let me pour you another cup, Mr. Pringle. And try these muffins; I made them myself. I am vastly anxious you should have a good breakfast—before—before—" Her voice died away.

"Really Miss Lockwood, I protest!" expostulated Stephen, bewildered and outraged. "This levity is most unseemly at such a time. Can it be that you have forgotten the melancholy event—"

"I have forgotten nothing!" replied Rose, with a hint of temper. "If you will have the goodness to walk with me to the garden gate, Mr. Pringle, I think you will understand."

Sedately she accepted his arm, and led him from the dining-room into the garden. The place had originally been a Franciscan friary, before the English drove the Spaniards from the island, in Cromwell's time. Half a century later, Captain Lockwood bought the deserted ruin from the Crown, cleaned out the great rain-water cisterns, restored the aqueducts, cleared and replanted the friars' garden, and rebuilt the dwelling for his own. The necessary simplicity of the early Spanish architecture had not been greatly interfered with. The richness of the garden had been easily regained. The same long avenue of royal palms, planted long ago by some beauty-loving friar, still led from the house to a small pavilion against the garden wall.

Built against the inner surface of the wall, level with its top and to the left of the gate as Rose and Stephen faced it, was a rough, newly-erected platform of posts and planks. A ladder led up to it from the ground inside the wall. Beside the ladder

rose the trunk of a stout *cedro*, brought here from outside the garden. It had been sawed off at the roots, its branches lopped off, and its base firmly planted in a deep hole near the platform. The freshly turned earth was all about.

On the platform stood Panama Williams, his long brass telescope to his eye, keeping watch in the direction of St. Luke's Town.

Stephen viewed these unusual garden accessories, including his erstwhile roomfellow, with an interest heightened by some degree of apprehension, as he remembered he was in a den of pirates. He withdrew his arm from the light weight of the girl's hand.

"What is he looking at?" he asked of his beautiful hostess.

"He is looking for a cloud of dust," the young lady replied.

"A cloud of dust?"

"Yes—your father galloping up the road with a troop of horse at his heels. We are expecting him at any moment."

"You are! But how—but why—" Then, regaining his usual manner, "Has the time come when I may ask your reason for abducting me, and your present intentions?"

"'Tis useless to do either, I assure you," quoted Rose, with a good imitation of Stephen's manner. She continued, "You remember the recent occasion when you used those words to me? Neither prayers nor threats, you told me, would move your father. I lost all hope for a little while. Then I thought of a way to move him: I kidnaped his son."

Stephen turned from her and walked a few steps back toward the house. Like two black portents, he saw David and Jonathan a short distance away, watching his every movement; they were watching Rose, too, as if for a signal. Stephen turned again to Rose who continued speaking:

"You remember I asked you to write a message for me to Sir Bellamy, and then I tied your hands, so you couldn't. But 'twas no matter; I wrote the note myself and left it where it would be readily discovered when they came to call you—before dawn—this morning." She motioned to him to follow her and led the way on toward the platform. They went along in silence for a few minutes, when Stephen stood suddenly stock still and gasped—

"Merciful Heavens!"

THEY had reached the path leading away from the pavilion and directly to the platform, and Stephen saw an object the procession of palms had prevented his noticing before. The trunk of the *cedro* tree had been allowed to retain one limb: a long, strong branch, projecting almost horizontally out over the garden wall. Dangling from that branch was a noosed rope. A gallows!

"Stephen," said Rose, not without agitation on her part, "I warned Sir Bellamy in that note that if he hanged my father, I would hang his son."

Out of the landward gate of St. Luke's Town and up the road toward Lockwood Hall galloped Sir Bellamy Pringle, Mr. Justice Price St. Luke's richest merchant—Colonel Wingate Taylor; Messieurs and Councillors; Peter Burgess, Thomas Courant, George Bendall and twenty other valiant gentlemen, booted and spurred, with swords at their sides and long flintlock horse-pistols in their saddle-holsters. There was no regular cavalry on the island at that time. The King's troops stationed there consisted of Colonel Taylor's two weak companies of fusileers. But the town was full of planters who had ridden in to see the hanging, and to whom a brush with the pirates who had kidnaped the governor's son promised even better sport.

The one professional soldier present, Colonel Wingate Taylor, who had joined the posse as a volunteer, viewed the affair more seriously than did the reckless, hard-riding planters. A veteran of the late wars in Flanders, he knew a strong position when he saw one, and he had seen few places easier to defend or harder to storm than Lockwood Hall.

The one-time friary stood on a bold promontory, broken off at the base by a ragged chasm in the rock, almost deep enough to turn the point into an island. Indeed, at high tide the white water, driven in from either side, sometimes met and threw up a spout of spray that drenched the braces and stringers of the wooden bridge that led to the garden gate.

The Franciscan friars had chosen this site because it required only a comparatively short stretch of high stuccoed wall to the right and left of the gate to shut them off from the world. Tradition said that the Spanish fathers had built the first bridge across the ravine by felling two tall trees

that grew on its brink. But when Captain Lockwood came to replace the rotting, sagging structure with a new one, he had been forced to cut and transport timbers thirty miles from the far side of St. Luke's, in the attempt to find any long enough to lay across the sixty-foot gap.

"If the defenders broke down the bridge," Colonel Taylor was saying to Sir Bellamy, "and knocked loop-holes in the wall, ten of them could hold the place against a thousand."

They were within a mile of Lockwood Hall, at a place where the road swung inland, skirting a wooded hill that hid the building from view until they rounded the last turn in the road, a musket-shot from the bridge. When they reached this turn, they spurred their horses forward, eager for a glimpse of their goal. At the sight that met their eyes, a great shout of rage and horror went up from their throats.

A short plank was thrust out over the top of the wall, directly under the improvised gallows. On the far end of that plank stood Stephen Pringle, arms bound to his side and a noose around his neck. Behind him on the wall loomed the tall form of Panama Williams, who straightway called a warning:

"Stand clear!" he shouted. "Put up your pistols and keep off the bridge, as you love this lad's life! If any of you fires a shot, or tries to lay me aboard, I'll hang the governor's son before your eyes!"

"You cowardly, murdering villain!" roared Sir Bellamy. "Release my boy this instant, or by —— I'll have you hanged on your own gallows!"

"Would that bring the lad alive again?" retorted the ex-buccaneer. "He's an innocent lad, why should he die on the gallows? Or why should brave John Lockwood hang, who is as innocent as he? Release the one, Sir Bellamy, and we set the other free."

Flushed of face, almost strangling with anger, the governor was unable to reply. But Mr. Simon Price, the Chief Justice of the colony, raised a harsh, domineering voice—

"Think of your own neck, fellow, for John Lockwood's is broken past repair!" There was a movement of alarm and protest among the besiegers and the Chief Justice was dragged out of the front rank.

Stephen Pringle, who had been standing straight and still, trembled as the fearful words rasped through Price's lips; he swayed, and would have fallen to his death, had not Panama Williams reached out a long arm and steadied him. The old buccaneer was unshaken.

"You lie! You slimy, shark-souled lawyer!" he thundered. "You lie, and every man here knows you lie! John Lockwood is still alive and under guard in the watch-house, wondering why ye haven't hanged him. I can stand here and count half the windows in St. Luke's Town with a good spy-glass. Nor do we lack friends to flash us a signal by day or night."

The Chief Justice's thin white face grew whiter with rage; but he made no reply. Neither did any gentleman there attempt to repeat his lie. They saw with relief that Stephen had overcome his unsteadiness, so that the man behind him was able to withdraw the support of his arm.

"Stand as you are, Williams!" commanded another voice. "I have you covered. Raise hand or foot to push Mr. Pringle over, and I'll put a ball through your heart!"

Unnoticed by the rest, during the words between Price and Williams, Colonel Taylor had walked his horse aside, to a point where he could aim at the hangman without danger of hitting Stephen. The Colonel was a famous marksman.

Panama Williams smiled down at him. "I made ready for this," he said. "Mr. Pringle stands on a loose plank; I stand on its other end. Whether I step aside, or drop with a bullet through me, down goes Mr. Pringle with a rope around his neck."

Muttering a word much used in Flanders, Colonel Taylor uncocked his pistol and returned it to its holster. Riding over to where Sir Bellamy sat his horse in inarticulate rage, the veteran said in a low voice:

"Sir, I should advise you to make peace on the fellow's terms. 'Tis impossible to force his position, and delay endangers your son's life."

The Governor had already realized he must yield, but temper made it impossible for him to do so with a good grace.

"You have me foul, you dastardly dog!" he cried, shaking his fist at the ex-buccaneer. "But a day will come when I'll have you hanged in chains for this, with the pirate John Lockwood and his strumpet of a daughter, who—"

"Say not another word!" shouted Panama Williams, blazing with sudden wrath at this

reference to Rose. "Say not another word against Rose Lockwood, or I'll pitch your son overside and jump down and fight ye all!"

"Enough!"

The gate in the wall flew open and John Lockwood's daughter stepped out on the bridge.

"Enough is enough of this talk," she said, with the air of a queen-mother rebuking a group of squabbling pages. "I will not have that poor helpless boy tormented and endangered any longer."

But her words and sudden appearance had just that effect. Again Panama Williams had to stretch out an arm to support Stephen.

"Sir Bellamy," said Rose, who was not looking at the gallows, but straight in front of her at the Governor and his men, "I do not ask you to pardon my father, who has done no wrong. Nor do I ask you to set him free that he may escape justice and go on the account, for nothing could ever force him to turn pirate. I only ask that you grant a six months' reprieve of the sentence now unjustly imposed upon him, and that during that time you make no attempt to apprehend or punish any of us who were engaged in last night's—last night's—work." She dropped her eyes considerately from the governor's face.

"Our purpose," she went on quite gently, "was only to win delay that we might collect evidence to prove my father's innocence and confound his foes, who are hurrying him to the gallows. Give us the status of prisoners on parole. I will pledge my word, and I know my father and Mr. Williams will pledge theirs, not to quit the island without your permission.

"And now, Sir Bellamy, if you will pledge me your word of honor as an Englishman to accept these terms and abide by them, then will I straightway release and give you back your son."

"Without waiting for me to set your father free?" asked the governor, his choler calmed by her cool, simple manner.

"I trust your Excellency's word," replied Rose, looking straight into his eyes.

"And I trust yours and pledge you mine," said Sir Bellamy Pringle. "And I ask your pardon for any despiteful thing I may have spoken in haste or anger, and I bow to the bravest, fairest gentlewoman on St. Luke's Island."

Raising his laced, three-cornered hat, he bent low in the saddle, as did every one who had ridden there with him, save only and solely Mr. Justice Price.

Rose curtsied gracefully in return, watching Price covertly, and thinking within her heart, "I know mine enemy."

CHAPTER V

HIS EXCELLENCY IS ENRAGED

"HA, STEPHEN! Back at your desk already? Is't safe for you to be up and about so soon after yesterday's strain?" inquired Sir Bellamy solicitously, as he entered his son's study. The old habit of concern for the boy's supposedly weak physique caused the big voice to soften, the heavy manner to take on tenderness.

"I am quite recovered, thank you, Father," answered the son, starting up from his chair. Indeed, his eyes were bright and clear, his cheeks delicately flushed as from a long sleep.

"Sit still, lad; sit still," said his father. "I'll fetch myself a chair from t'other room. Why the plague do you keep but one chair in here?"

"So as not to offer encouragement to idle visitors who might stay my work," answered Stephen promptly, before he realized his father might well be offended by these most truthful words. But the governor burst out into one of his hearty laughs.

"Ho, ho, ho! Ho-o-o! Well said, my boy. 'Fore ——, Stephen, till this last day I thought you had no more mettle in you than a titmouse. But that is ever the way with you quiet ones. Howbeit, have no fear that I have come for any idle chit-chat. You have proved yourself a man, my son, and I have come to you for counsel. This Lockwood business has tangled me in a cursed coil."

Stephen's whole face brightened. It was the first time his father had treated him in a man-to-man fashion, free from condescension.

"Is there news since you brought me home yesterday, at high noon?"

"And you fell asleep at once," smiled his father affectionately.

"It scarce seems possible," Stephen said, "that I have slept the clock twice around. It bewilders me."

"It was sleep you needed, my boy; but you frightened us rarely when you dropped off so suddenly. I sent right off for little Doctor Rives. When he heard what a night and morning you'd spent, and how you'd been up to all hours with your reports and copying ever since the Lockwood trial began, he said that 'it was only Mother Nature claiming her own.' "

"Yes," Stephen nodded. "I thank you, father. My appetite now is all for work."

The Governor laughed again, pleased with his son's energy.

"This Lockwood tangle you speak of, father. Is there aught I can do to help you?"

Sir Bellamy plumped down at one end of Stephen's desk the chair he had brought from the bedroom, and plumped himself into it, whereat the chair squeaked.

"Yes—my son—if you can tie a millstone around Mr. Justice Price's neck and cast him into the sea," growled the Governor of St. Luke's. "I've kept him on from Governor Beaseley's time because of his knowledge of the law and customs of the island. And how does he requite me? First, by nearly causing your death when he tried to frighten Panama Williams with a knavish lie. But he didn't care about you, boy. That man thinks of nothing but his own ends. I'm beginning to distrust him; for, hardly had we got you home, when he comes and urges me to break my word and hang Lockwood, because, forsooth, my promise was made under duress and not legally binding."

"Polecat," said Stephen, forgetting his elegance and closing his nostrils with thumb and forefinger. He looked fairly ill with disgust.

"'Fore ——, Stephen, he made me so furious angry that I was struck dumb and blind, even as I was when I saw you with the noose around your neck. My breath choked in my throat and I could see naught but a red and swirling mist before my eyes."

"Father," said Stephen anxiously, "you should have Dr. Rives bleed you, or you may some day be smitten by apoplexy."

"He'd draw no blood if he stuck a lancet into Price," growled the Governor.

"What did you say to him, father?"

"Nothing," answered Sir Bellamy. "I left him where he sat in my most comfortable chair and went straightway to the watch-house in my own person, saw Captain Lockwood and exchanged pledges with him. Pirate he may be, but he looked me in the eyes and gave me his word like a man, and—stap me!—but I believe he'll keep it. I ordered him released, and 'twould have diverted you to see him riding across the square, through the crowd, who were throwing up their hats and cheering him as if he were the Duke of Marlborough come back from the wars, instead of the man they had come to see hanged."

"Miss Lockwood thinks," Stephen hazarded, "that Price and other rich men on St. Luke's have secret dealings with pirates, and want to hang her father because he is an honest man and would be dangerous to them if he found them out."

"——! No!" ejaculated the Governor, taken aback much as Stephen had been. "Yet, 'tis but natural the girl should think so. But I'm suspecting some of them are rogues of a sort. There's this, Stephen: 'Tis common knowledge that Peter Burgess had to postpone the sailing of the *Virgin Queen* because her passengers and crew wanted to wait a day and see the hanging. Then when she did sail, this morning, who should go aboard at the last moment but Burgess himself and another member of the Council, his crony, Thomas Courant. What right had they to leave the island like that, without so much as a by-your-leave to me?"

"Had Price had time to confer with them after his scurrilous proposal to you?" Stephen asked.

"Yes, it seems he sent for them. I knew nothing of all this till an hour after the *Virgin Queen* had sailed, when Councillor Bendall told me, and said he had seen them both coming out of Price's house, and that in his opinion the two were going to London to cry up Price and to tell ill tales of me to his Majesty's ministers. There's no denying my bargain with Lockwood's daughter was most irregular," the Governor concluded.

He was near to remembering that charming girl with regret, and wishing her bearing had not been so noble, nor her eyes so blue, nor the gold so bright in her hair as the sun shone on it. But what else could he do? She had him trapped, and cleverly too. There was a wench for you! But he sighed.

"It may cost me my governorship," he mused, "before I have a chance to defend myself."

"And it is all my fault!" exclaimed Stephen, in grief.

"Nay, lad, 'tis no fault in a man to love and fight," answered Sir Bellamy, looking at his son with more pride and affection than Stephen had ever seen in his father's eyes. "When I was your age, sirrah, I had done both more times than I can now remember. Few women could resist me then, and fewer men dared—when I was a young gallant back in King William's reign. And it grieved me to see my only son growing up so prim and cold—till Rose Lockwood came! She's mired me deep in a pretty bog, the clever minx, but I can forgive her for having shown me that my son is a man."

"What mean you, father?" asked Stephen, wondering what could be going on in his father's mind.

"Nay, no modest airs with your old father, lad. Tell me—" he leaned, confidential and beaming admiration toward the boy—"how the deuce did she make you go down there by the Flanders Tavern, after Cary Tompkins had warned you not to. 'Stap me, your Excellency,' Tompkins said to me, 'I'd never have let them pass had I dreamed that Mr. Pringle would have escorted her a step farther than just around the corner to Lockwood's town house!'"

Stephen sat and stared at his father, unable to speak.

"And she took you right into the midst of Panama Williams's bullies! She's a clever maid!" The old man's eyes snapped with relish. "But oh, lad, lad, what warm work you made of them! The man in front of whose house you were beset told me that he saw you stretch three on their backs and send three more howling down the street, before Williams himself came up with his whole crew of cut-throats behind him, and overpowered you. Come, let me hear the story from your own lips, my boy."

Stephen's lips did not move, except to tremble slightly, and they were white. So this was the secret of his father's new comradeship, so dear to Stephen! More than for anything else the lonely boy had yearned for this companionableness in his father, for the lack of which his books had not fully comforted him. In his boy's heart, too, he had secretly longed to be the gallant fighter his father was now mistaking him for. But the habit of strict and literal truth was deep-rooted in Stephen Pringle's soul.

"There were only four who attacked us, father. Of these the chairman struck down two and pursued the third, while Miss Lockwood engaged the fourth——"

"Miss Lockwood! What? Did the lady take a hand in the fighting? What were you doing to allow it?"

"Father—let me explain. I—was—in the sedan—"

"In the sedan!" exploded Sir Bellamy, bounding to his feet. "Do you mean to tell me that you took refuge in the sedan, and let a girl fight for you? Why didn't you fight?"

"Because I was bound and gagged."

"Bound and gagged? Who, in the fiend's name, had a chance to bind and gag you?"

"Miss Lockwood—"

"Miss Lockwood!" echoed the outraged father. He knew from lifelong experience that his son was speaking the truth, however monstrous his words might sound. "Tell me about it," he commanded with ominous calm.

"Here—in this very room," murmured the shame-faced young man. "You—you are utterly mistaken, father—I made no love to her. When I refused to let her see you, she caught me in a noose as I sat here, tied me hand and foot with the ropes that looped back the curtains," he raised a dejected hand toward his study windows; his father could see the red velvet draperies were hanging straight. "She had her slaves carry me away in the sedan-chair, while she walked beside, disguised in my blue and silver suit. I—I fought my hardest, father, but—she—she was too quick and strong for me."

"Too strong for you!" raged Sir Bellamy. "A girl too strong for you——"

"She took me by surprize, sir—from behind—she—"

But the tide of Sir Bellamy's wrath poured on over his son's weak protest:

"My son—Bellamy Pringle's son—beaten and bound and carried off by a girl! By ——, had I known this, I'd have let them hang you—you puny weakling, you milksop, you mandrake! You—you—"

The Governor's voice choked and was silent. His deeply flushed face turned an incredible color, his eyes seemed about to leap from their sockets. He swayed on his feet, lurched against the desk, and fell to the floor, where he lay as though he had received a musket-ball through his heart.

CHAPTER VI

THE BEARER OF ILL TIDINGS

THE lofty, deeply mullioned windows of the library of Lockwood Hall stood wide open to the moonlight. Opposite one of them stood a massive table of rough-hewn native mahogany, its surface polished by long use, its rich color deepened by time. It had been evolved by the patient hands of the old friars, working with insufficient tools but with all the time in the world. Patient, and loving, too, had been the hands that carved figures of the apostles in crude but reverent bas-relief on the four legs of the table. All twelve apostles were there, the craftsman having shaped the legs roughly three-cornered so that they each presented three surfaces for the exercise of his art.

The frames of the chairs were of the same rich-hued mahogany, the backs and seats being covered with stretched hides, worn dark and smooth and much more desirable than upholstery in that warm clime.

The moon's light was so bright as to make candles superfluous, unless one wanted to read, and no one of the little group around the library table wanted to do anything so peaceful. They felt more like a council of war.

"Who were the four scoundrels who attacked my girl when she was on her way to warn you, Williams?" asked John Lockwood, with a look in his eye more threatening than any vows of vengeance.

It was the day of his release on parole, about nine o'clock in the evening. Panama Williams, quaffing his lime juice and rum at the other end of the table, one bony knee rammed against the Apostle John's mid-ribs, answered readily—

"Malachi Forbes, Tom Tilden, "Keelhaul" Davis and Duff Fletcher; them was the sons of swabs that tried it."

"Which was the one I had under my foot when you came up, Panama?" Rose asked.

"Malachi Forbes, that was," answered Williams. "Tilden was dead when we found him. Duff Fletcher was laid out beside him, and is still alive, they tell me, and raving on a sick bed. If he lives, he'll never raise his right hand again, for his shoulder bone's shivered to splinters—the work of David's stave or Jonathan's."

Rose shuddered, but continued to listen.

"Keelhaul Davis ran for it, with David and Jonathan after him, giving tongue like a couple of hounds, and ran slap into the rest of us as we came, head on, to the rescue."

"It was fleet-footed little Bob, Father, who slipped past the ruffians in the dark and got word to Panama of my danger," Rose said, proud of her link-boy.

"I had no time to waste on Keelhaul," resumed Panama Williams, calmly, "so I let him spit himself on my cutlass-point as he came. He was dead when I freed the blade."

Again Rose shuddered. She was used enough to Panama Williams's tales of buccaneering with their fights and killings, but she was not used to knowing the spitted men and actually visualizing the gory deeds as her part in the brawl under recital caused her to do involuntarily.

"Rose had Malachi Forbes under her heel and afraid to stir when I came up. I turned him over to two of my lads till you were free, sir, and could say what to do with him; but the jack-fools—" The narrator sat growling under his breath.

"Go on, Williams," urged Captain Lockwood, with a little impatience.

"The jack-fools were so joyed at your release, sir, that they drank themselves muzzy, refusing aught of the drink to Malachi Forbes, who remained sober, sir—"

"And overpowered your two lads and got away," surmised Rose, taking up Panama's reluctant speech.

"True," acknowledged Panama; "true so far; but there was a fight."

"And the coward took some punishment before his escape, I hope," said Captain Lockwood.

"Mebbe," sighed Panama; "mebbe, if so we can judge by the wounds he left on my two lads. The two are now in the jail, wrapped in bandages till they look like reefed sails. And Malachi Forbes—the rat!—is gone; nobody knows, or nobody will say, where."

"Wherever it be, I will find him and hold him to account," said John Lockwood. "Twice have I saved that cur from starving. Once I advanced him money to buy a share in a turtling sloop. I have shipped him when no other skipper would sign him on. And now the unmanly brute attacks my daughter, who had to fight for her very life against him!"

"Tae do the mon justice," interposed a mellow and humorous voice from the shadowed end of the table, "he didnae do thot till after the puir defenseless lassie had started tae cut him tae pieces. By all counts, the carle was lucky tae escape wi' his life!"

Malcolm McDougal was fond of a mild jest. He was leader of a band of refugees from the derelict Scotch colony in Darien, who had been cast up on St. Luke's and befriended by John Lockwood nearly twenty years before. He was a short, dark Celt, with a deep chest and immensely broad shoulders; and the uncrowned king of Inverness, the now flourishing settlement Lockwood had helped the shipwrecked Scots to found on the northern side of St. Luke's.

Panama Williams was thinking. The puckers drew almost together around his shrewd little eyes, glinting away back in his head.

"There's more than base ingratitude," he announced, "there's a —— plot behind all this business, mates; for who was it but this Malachi Forbes, this low, boughten spy, who first urged the captain's friends to band together and storm the watch-house?"

"Whoever fathered it, it was a mad idea," said Lockwood. "Suppose it had been successful and you had set me free, where could we have gone?"

"On board the *Swiftsure!*" proclaimed Panama Williams in answer. "She lies in the harbor, cleaned and refitted. The court has placed an armed guard aboard: six drunken, lubberly bailiffs. We could 'a clapped 'em under hatches or dropped 'em overside with small labor. Before any could 'a stopped us, we'd 'a been past the fort and to sea!"

"And how far could we have cruised without food or water?" demanded John Lockwood. "There was still plenty of powder and shot aboard, but no other stores."

"Ye needna ha' voyaged farther than tae bonny wee Inverness," answered Malcolm McDougal. "Ilka sloop i' the loch was laden wi' beef and biscuit and a' ready tae pit oot and plenish the *Swiftsure.*"

"But where could we have sailed to? What profit would it have been to go elsewhere to be hanged? Or did you believe that, being desperate, I'd turn pirate?"

"We kenned fine that ye'd be hangit for ane i' St. Luke's Town, for a' your innocence, gin we dinna bestir oursels," replied McDougal. "And we found five-score leal lads who were willing tae sail wi' ye tae Lunnon, and try for justice there, or gie the Crown lawyers guid cause for hangin' us a', rather than sit tamely by and see an honest man done tae death."

"I do not deserve this," said John Lockwood, in a voice shaken by emotion. "I thank God for such unselfish friends! To find in one small island a hundred who would stand by me, even on the scaffold—"

"Haven't ye stood by us?" interrupted Panama Williams, sharply, to hide his own emotion. "Aren't ye always helping the under dog?"

"I know what it is to be down myself," answered Lockwood, almost as if it were in extenuation. "I have been an indentured servant."

"And ye've been an honest merchant, the only one in all the islands to buy poor folks' crops and sell them English goods at a fair price. Even more by being honest than by being anything else ye've made the slave-owners and other silk-clad thieves hate ye," Williams boiled over. "They plotted to hang ye, and to have us, sir, your friends, shot in the public square. And Malachi Forbes, I say, was hired by 'em to play the spy!"

"I believe it," Rose said. "Listen." She leaned across the table earnestly. "When I came forth from Government House two nights ago, wearing Stephen Pringle's blue-and-silver, and came to the square, Captain Cary Tompkins told me that he had heard of the gathering at the Flanders Tavern from one of Mr. Price's spies. Those were his very words—'one of Mr. Price's spies.' I had not thought of it till now. It has just come to me: Could it be that Mr. Price had more than one of his creatures at the Flanders Tavern, and that Malachi Forbes and the three with him, were also Price's spies, running on ahead to tell the soldiers that the rescue-party were about to leave the tavern?"

"We were about to leave!" boomed Panama Williams, with a resounding bang of his big palm on the table. "We were having a last glass all round before shoving off, when little Bob ran in and plucked me by the sleeve. 'Tis plain. Price hired Malachi Forbes to stir us up to attack the watch-house, so that the soldiery might shoot us down."

"Father," cried Rose, springing to her feet, "do you believe this?"

"I prefer not to say what I believe," her father answered, "till I know more than I do now. Let no one breathe a word of this outside us four. Remember you are bringing the gravest charges, not only against the richest man on the island—he is also a member of the Council and our Chief Justice, a man whose power and authority is second only to that of the Governor himself. Our first task is to get hold of the evidence that clears me." He reached out and took Rose's hand, and drew her to his side. "Thanks to you, my dear," he said, "we have six months for the hunt."

"'Tis my opeenion," began McDougal, when Rose interrupted:

"Sh-h-h-h! Listen!"

In the sudden stillness they made out a faint rhythmic sound, growing more distinct as it came nearer. After a while:

"A HORSE, driven hard," announced Panama Williams.

A little later the horse's hoofs drummed across the wooden bridge. The four ran out onto the terrace and stopped on the steps leading down to the path. Up the long moonlit avenue of palms a horse came laboring at a weary gallop. The rider was Stephen Pringle.

Rose ran down the steps and received the reins from Stephen's hands as he jumped to the ground. She paced the nearly-winded steed back and forth slowly, calling on "David!" "Jonathan!" Meanwhile Stephen was gasping out without a word of greeting or introduction:

"My father has been struck down with apoplexy!"

Rose stood stockstill, suddenly unmindful of her love and concern for horseflesh.

"Is he dead?" asked John Lockwood, looking into the boy's white, troubled face.

"No—he lives, and will recover. But he must lie for weeks in a quiet room, till his strength returns. Dr. Rives has bled him to exhaustion, and he strictly forbids that any one shall see Sir Bellamy and tell him aught of what has happened. Indeed," declared Stephen in great distress, "it would bring on another stroke and kill him."

"Well, lad?" encouraged the kindly voice of the master of Lockwood Hall, "what is it that has happened?"

"Mr. Price," gulped Stephen, "has declared himself acting governor—he has due warrant of law—and is on his way here with fifty men, to arrest you all." He sank to the steps, spent with anxiety, the heat, and his long, hard ride.

CHAPTER VII

GUESTS AT LOCKWOOD HALL

TWO horsemen rode slowly, side by side, over the rough road leading from St. Luke's Town to Lockwood Hall. Behind the riders tramped a compact little column of fifty officers and men, all that were available from the two small, fever-depleted companies of the Fourth Fusileers who garrisoned the crumbling old ruin of a Spanish fort that was supposed to guard the town of St. Luke's against the King's enemies.

"I care naught for Sir Bellamy's so-called promise," Mr. Simon Price was saying to his companion on horseback. "It was not legally binding, even on himself, and places no restraint whatever on the actions of his successor."

"His substitute," corrected the other horseman.

"As it may please you," replied Price, a quiver of anger agitating his thin nostrils. "As a magistrate, and as *acting governor of this colony*," emphasizing the last words deliberately, "it is my sworn duty to apprehend and return to custody the convicted pirate and murderer, John Lockwood, together with his accomplices. And it is your duty, Colonel Taylor, to uphold the civil authorities."

"I know my duty, sir!" replied the veteran hotly. "Were it aught but my sworn duty to the Crown, and were you not his Majesty's representative, I'd not be here by your side on this dastardly mission."

Simon Price chose to ignore the Colonel's contemptuous words and still more contemptuous tone. Too well he knew that any demand for an apology, or an attempt at an official rebuke, would be promptly met with a challenge. The Chief Justice had not the least desire to meet Colonel Wingate Taylor on the field of honor.

Officially, the soldiers trudging behind them knew nothing about the reason for this sudden night march; but many wild rumors had reached the fort, about midnight brawls in the streets of the town, piratical

uprisings, and the repulse of Sir Bellamy's posse at Lockwood Hall. Left behind to the tame duties of safeguarding the capital and the prisoner in the watch-house, while the amateurs rode forth to rescue Stephen Pringle, these same fifty fusileers had grumbled and sworn mightily. Now they marched in good spirits up the moonlit road, elated at having an active rôle in the dramatic happenings on the island, which was usually, in all conscience, a dull enough place.

The moon was with them till they entered the wood near Lockwood Hall. Here a great cloud obscured its light, and the two men up front on horseback had to use their eyes sharply to keep from losing the road. They felt their way along, their men on foot close behind, till they came to the edge of the wood facing the Hall. This brought them to within a quarter of a mile of the bridge. They were still well within the shadow of the trees when Colonel Taylor faced his horse about and commanded—

"Fusileers, halt! Load!"

Ramrods rattled and gunlocks clicked briskly for half a minute.

"Fix bayonets!"

The newly invented weapon, which had lately driven out the pike, was screwed to each muzzle.

"Captain," whispered Colonel Taylor to his adjutant, "have the goodness to fetch me Nimble Dick."

The great cloud still spread over the sky, hiding the moon. Luck was with the Chief Justice.

Soon the Captain returned with a little sergeant carrying a halberd much taller than himself. The little sergeant saluted Colonel Taylor smartly.

"Sergeant, you've been to Lockwood Hall?"

"Yes, sir."

"We have to take that place tonight. Art ready as ever for a scout in the dark?"

"Yes, sir."

"There may be a garrison—pickets out—the bridge broken down—anything. There may be any number of armed and desperate men behind the wall. There's a twelve-pounder that Captain Lockwood keeps to salute passing ships; if he has been warned of our coming, he may have charged it with small-shot and trained it to sweep the bridge. Or he may be alone and sound asleep in bed. Find out what you can, Sergeant."

"Yes, sir," said Nimble Dick, again saluting smartly, and, trailing his halberd, melted into the darkness.

The detachment stood at ease, waiting in silence. The acting governor moved nervously on his horse, due not so much to his habitual impatience as to the thought of crossing a bridge swept by a twelve-pounder charged with small-shot. The Chief Justice was no soldier; he was a merchant and a politician, fearless only in the realms of finance and intrigue, and even there he liked to keep himself concealed and safe.

In half an hour, as silently as he had vanished, Nimble Dick reappeared. He stood before his colonel, saluting:

"No pickets, no one behind the wall, sir," he reported. "Bridge standing, no house lights, nobody stirring, sir."

"You found the gate open, then?"

"No, sir; 'twas closed and barred. I scaled the wall and opened the gate, sir."

"Well done, Sergeant," commended Colonel Taylor, and he passed the keen little scout a guinea. "And now, Mr, Price, shall we ride on, you and I, to the Hall?"

"Lead on with your soldiers, Colonel. I will follow."

Colonel Taylor favored the man of power with a short glance of open scorn, and rode away at the head of his fusileers; while Price, waiting to fall in at the rear, swore to himself that he would have that officer recalled to England as soon as he could manage it.

The moon was now free of the cloud, but the Colonel led his men on without thought of taking precautions, so absolute was his reliance on Nimble Dick.

"Break step!" commanded Colonel Taylor, as he rode on to the bridge.

A minute later he halted his men in the garden and looked round in vain for Mr. Price. Riding back to the open archway, the Colonel saw the acting governor sitting his motionless horse near the ledge of rock supporting the outer edge of the bridge.

"Go ahead!" Price called, seeing himself observed. "I will await you here."

"Zounds, sir, you'll do nothing of the kind!" Colonel Taylor called back, to the joy of the fusileers. "An Englishman's house is his castle, where none may enter without lawful warrant. The papers are in your pocket, sir, and none but a civil officer has power to serve them. You have prated to me of my duty; now do your own—or

I'll face my men about and march them back to barracks."

With exceeding ill grace Mr. Price walked his horse across the bridge, with impudent slowness, and in through the gateway; when, as if his entrance had been the signal, he saw the soldiers, the long rows of palms, the garden, the front of the house, lit up by a sudden great flash of yellow light. His ears were stunned by a tremendous explosion. The ground trembled beneath his horse's hoofs, and the frightened animal gave a convulsive leap, throwing his rider headlong from the saddle.

Lying half-conscious on the ground, Simon Price heard a prolonged, ripping crash that seemed to come from the depths of the ravine he had just reluctantly crossed. Something flew like a roundshot through the tops of the royal palms, cutting off great leaves that fluttered harshly and heavily to earth amidst a pattering shower of small stones and fragments of splintered wood. The prostrate man raised his bruised head, which felt as if it would burst with the effort, and he saw the soldiers standing calmly, awaiting orders, and Colonel Wingate Taylor giving a notable exhibition of horsemanship as he quieted his plunging, terrified mare.

"What in creation has happened?" asked Price, having with difficulty risen to a sitting position.

"The bridge has been blown up," replied the colonel composedly, as he brought his mount to a standstill. "Lockwood must have placed a keg or so of powder beneath the ledge at the other end." Price's hair stood on end; where would he be now if he had not crossed the bridge? The colonel was still talking, and Price heard him say: "Now how could he have fired it, without our seeing the burning fuse? 'Fore ——, but he's trapped us neatly!"

Shaking with rage and shock, the Chief Justice got to his feet, cursing Lockwood in the vilest language the fusileers had ever heard—even in Flanders.

"For shame, sir! Has he not spared your life," reproved Colonel Taylor, "by waiting till you had crossed over before he sprung the mine?—What is it, Dick?"

The alert little sergeant stood at attention before his colonel.

"If you please, sir, I know how it was done. I heard a click, like a lock, just before the explosion. I went back to the gate to look at the place and think it out, sir. A hole must 'a been bored in the head of a powder-keg, and a charged pistol put in and made fast, with the lock outside and a long stout cord tied to the trigger."

"And you didn't see it when you came scouting?"

"Sir, I—no, sir," Nimble Dick's crest fell. "It must 'a been hidden deep in a cleft, sir." It went hard with him to make excuses.

"They were too clever for us, Dick," said the colonel, kindly, seeing his unhappiness, while the shaken Price glared at both of them.

"Somewhere among those bushes on the far side of the ravine, Mr. Price," guessed the colonel, following the lead of Nimble Dick, "Lockwood or one of his friends lay waiting, cord in hand, to catch us like rabbits in a snare. Now they can mount and ride away with none to pursue them."

"The island is not big enough to hide them from me," began Mr. Price, in hot bravado. Catching Colonel Taylor's unfriendly eye, and remembering he had an audience of fifty more, he amended righteously, "To hide them from justice—and the law."

"But the seas are broader, Mr. Price," the colonel said, and the thought seemed to give him relief. "And we, ourselves, sir," he added, "can roam no farther than the garden gate till some one comes along and throws us a rope."

And while they rode to the house to refresh themselves and hold counsel, Nimble Dick, his pride suffering that he had not seen a cord so cunningly hidden no man could have seen it, began to prowl about, seeking a way to redeem his honor.

CHAPTER VIII

FLIGHT

THE LOCKWOOD party were hiding in the same wood where the soldiers halted to await the return of Nimble Dick. They knew the soldiers were there; they saw Nimble Dick streak toward the hall, a small dark figure, hardly distinguishable from the dark earth, except that it moved with a speed that excited their wonder, but not their concern. And they knew the scout's purpose, though they were too far away to hear the words uttered in the enemy detachment.

They had seen Price stop at the threshold of the bridge, alone, and Panama Williams with wicked glee, thought to see him blown to Kingdom Come; but he thought not with the mind of Captain Lockwood, whose hand held the cord that controlled the pistol as he lay concealed within the bushes referred to by Colonel Taylor.

As soon as he had blown up the bridge, Lockwood hurried back to the wood.

"Price is trapped," he announced, curtly. "We have till dawn to act." His eyes sought out Stephen in the dark shadows. "Do I understand you to say, Mr. Pringle, that Price called out the troops and left town secretly?"

"Yes, sir," said Stephen, adding: "He had to do it secretly to do it successfully. There would have been much a-do, perhaps a pitched battle, if the people had known, or guessed, what he was up to. Outside Government House and the fort, no one knows of it yet. I happened to overhear Colonel Taylors's protests. Mr. Price summoned him to the palace to confer with him—to order him on this expedition."

"And then you rode to warn me. Why?"

"I—I do not know," stammered Stephen.

"It was a generous and manly deed," the hunted man said warmly. "Perhaps some day I can thank you properly. For the present, tell me—do you consider me bound by my promise to remain on St. Luke's?"

"Most certainly not, sir," answered Stephen; "since Mr. Price, assuming the Governor's place, takes it on himself to break the other side of the contract. If you stay, you will be hanged."

"Then," asked Rose, stepping forward and trying to see Stephen's face, "you no longer believe my father guilty?"

"I do not," Stephen replied. "Even before I saw him spare Mr. Price's life just now—"

"And a fool's trick it was, saving your presence, sir," growled Panama Williams. "I'd 'a blown him higher than Morgan did the Spanish admiral at Maracaibo. Now do we heave ahead with the old scheme?"

"We must raise a crew, seize the *Swiftsure*, and put out on tonight's tide, as we've planned, yes," said Captain Lockwood. "But let it be clearly understood by all here and by all hands who ship with me, that I am not going on the account. In plain words, I am no pirate and will not be forced into the life of a lawless sea-rover."

"Yet I must to sea, or be hanged ashore. I can not trade, I will not prey on honest ships, but I can and will prey on pirates. In particular, I shall seek for those who took the *William and Mary*, because I can prove my innocence by establishing their guilt. That being the one thing I want, it will pay me for the cruise—more than enough. Therefore I give up the owner's and skipper's share of whatever plunder or prize-money we may take, and it shall be divided among the crew."

"But I'll have no mutinous dogs like those who ruined my last cruise, and then swore a halter around my neck. I'm fighting to get that halter off. Pressed though we are, we ship none but true men!"

Malcolm McDougal spoke up:

"I'll fetch ye a score of leal lads frae Inverness," he offered. "An' I ha' followed the sea mysel' and could mak' shift tae tak' a watch, gin ye need a second mate."

"Good, McDougal. Panama, can you raise twenty of your picked hundred in town tonight, before the turn of the tide?"

"Aye, and more."

"I can myself sign on as many hereabouts from among my own tenants," Lockwood said. "That makes three-score; more than enough to sail the ship, but few to fight a ship like the *Swiftsure*. I'll embark my lot on one of the sloops in Coral Cove and sail for St. Luke's Town."

"But you can't, father," objected Rose. "You'd have to beat into the harbor against the ebb, and that you couldn't do without tacking so close to the fort you would surely be seen and challenged."

"That's true," her father admitted. "We'll have to beach the boat on the seaward side of Gallows Point, cross the neck afoot, and meet Mr. Williams and his men on Galleon Beach. There we'll seize every boat we can find, shove off, and board the *Swiftsure*—"

"Drop the bailiffs overboard," interrupted Panama Williams, on a gleeful note, "and head for the open sea!"

"If we win to sea," continued Lockwood, "we'll run out of sight of land and work round to the other side of the island for Inverness. Tomorrow night, McDougal, look for us, with three lights low on each quarter and our stomachs sharp set for your 'beef and biscuit and a'.' "

The Scotchman got up from the gnarled root that had served him for a seat and

began to untie his horse's bridle from the limb to which he had tethered it. Rose and her father had also brought their mounts from the Hall stables, together with Stephen's blown and leg-sore gray.

"Take my horse, Panama—he's not hard to manage—and ride to town as fast as you can," ordered Captain Lockwood.

"Me? Ride a horse?" asked the astounded old buccaneer. "Never steered one in my life. I'll shove along afoot."

"Let me ride him, Captain Lockwood," suggested Stephen. "Mr. Williams can sit behind and grip me round the waist. Your horse is fresh and strong and can carry us both; and you can ride mine, sir, to Coral Cove."

The captain refused.

"It would implicate you, lad, should your mount be found there. No; you must take your gray back with you to Government House."

"I'm not going back to Government House," Stephen replied. He looked very serious and very decided, standing there in the dusk of the trees. "I am going to sea with you, sir," he announced, raising an eager face in the dark.

"Bravo, Stephen!" Rose applauded him promptly; "and so am I."

"You are not," contradicted her father with decision. "Mr. Pringle may come if he pleases, but you are going straight to Inverness with Mr. McDougal, and stay there with his relatives. That's the safest place for you till we return."

"But father!" exclaimed Rose indignantly. "Why take Stephen Pringle and not me? I can set a course or take a watch, hand, reef, and steer with any seaman on St. Luke's. Can Stephen Pringle? And I can out-shoot him, out-fence him, out-wrestle—' She was forgetting her gratitude to Stephen in a passion of disappointment.

"Rose! For shame!" stormed her father.

"It is true," admitted Stephen, stung by the girls words. "I—I am shamefully weak for a grown man. That is why I wish to go to sea with you, sir, and do the work of a sailor, so far as I may be able to perform it." The return of his humility brought with it a return to his formality of phrase. "Hitherto I have not dared exercise overmuch. Now I don't care. If my weak heart—"

"Your—what?" asked Captain Lockwood. He considered Stephen whimsically. The youth stood abashed. A moment ago he had felt like a man among men, with Captain Lockwood asking his opinion and expressing appreciation of him, much as his father had done that luckless morning.

"Whoever told you you had a weak heart, lad?" John Lockwood asked kindly.

"A doctor—"

"A fool, Mr. Pringle! A blistering, bloodletting, befoggled fool! I know enough of human ills to act as my ship's doctor, and I know this, sirrah: that no man with a weak heart could have passed through what you have gone through these last three days without dropping dead by the wayside." His eyes measured Stephen, whose spirits were visibly lifting. "You're undermuscled and soft," he said, "but you have sound organs, I'll wager, and a good frame. You'll berth aft and turn out for duty with Mr. Williams's watch." To himself he thought: "By the end of this cruise, Mr. Weak Heart, my sweet Rose won't find you so easy to abduct."

Boom!

The horses started and plunged. Every eye of the little company turned at once to the captain's face.

"The twelve-pounder!" he exclaimed, voicing the thought in the mind of each. "They'll rouse the island and mayhap shoot a line and grapnel across the ravine. Mount and away!"

Stephen helped Rose to the saddle. He bowed over the hand she reached down to him.

"Good-by!" he said.

"Au revoir!" she answered, and Stephen wondered at her sparkling eyes. She held her body dauntlessly, and smiled inscrutably in the semi-darkness. McDougal snatched her horse's rein and led her mount after his through the wood to the Inverness road, which ran nearly at a right angle to the road to St. Luke's Town. Lockwood rode off on Stephen's tired horse, with David and Jonathan running at his stirrups. Panama Williams climbed a convenient stump, and scrambled up behind Stephen, exhorting him to "clap on sail."

"Keep her full and by, lad," he grunted, as he bounced profanely up and down on the high-trotting hunter's hindquarters. "Once that blink-blanked son-of-Satan, Price, gets free, he'll rouse all hands and the cook! This dash-blankety-dashed horse needs ballast, blank-dash his blinkin' eyes!"

ALL THE way to St. Luke's Town the ex-buccaneer swore steadily, repeating himself seldom in all the seven miles. It was a liberal education in profanity for Stephen, who—it must be told—was trying to stow away some of the words. They crossed the sand-choked moat and slipped into the city by the same convenient gap in the palisade that had served Rose when she carried him off in her sedan-chair. The difference for Stephen between that ride and this!

At the Flanders Tavern Williams scrambled thankfully to the ground.

"Stow that man-killing beast abaft the tavern, and wait in the tap-room for further orders," he said to Stephen. "I'll send the lads there as fast as I can turn 'em out."

Straddling stiffly, Panama disappeared up a black, unsavory alley. Stephen tied the horse in a tumble-down shed that did duty for a stable, entered the tap-room with some trepidation—well concealed—sat down in the darkest corner, and ordered a pint of port.

Except for the villainous looking barman, he was the only occupant of the long, low-ceiled room. Ten minutes later in swaggered three big turtlers, cutlass on hip and sea-bags on shoulder.

"Where away, mates?" was the barman's greeting.

"Lockwood's account," answered one. "Honest John's off to sea this tide, with a *price* on his head."

That pun was hard-worked for the next hour and a half, being revived by one or another for each newcomer. At the end of that time there were eighteen seamen in the tap-room and the babble of talk was deafening.

"Hark, mates!" called the barman, pounding for silence with a rum bottle. "Listen!"

Deep and ominous through the hush that followed rolled a resounding drum-beat, followed by the sudden clanging of the great alarm-bell in the cathedral tower. In through the door burst Panama Williams, gasping for breath.

"To the boats!" he panted. "The Town Guard be a-musterin' in the plaza. To Galleon Beach, and keep together!"

Out of the Flanders Tavern and down the beach they jostled and stumbled, pursued by an ever-growing clamor from the awakening city. Stephen ran beside the first mate, his heart pumping blood into his veins in fine style. He tingled with life.

"How did they find out? Who gave the alarm?" he asked as he ran.

"Some son-of-a-swab of a soldier managed to escape from the hall," answered Williams, as well as he could for lack of breath.

"How could he have crossed the gap?"

"Dunno. Mebbe they rammed him into the twelve-pounder and shot him over," puffed the old fellow. "Mebbe they threw him across and hove a horse over after him; or mebbe he started afoot and ran till he found a horse. Leastways, he came poundin' in on a big black horse, through the town gate, and up to Cary Tompkins's house, where I had two lubbers posted outside to stop spies and messengers. Didn't stop that soldier—not for long, they didn't. He rode slap over one of 'em, cutlass and all, jumped off and broke t'other one's head with a halberd. Time they crawled off and found me, drums was a-beatin' and all —— loose. Price must a' smoked our scheme and sent word to Tompkins to turn out the militia."

"Look!" exclaimed Stephen. "What's that?—ahead there!"

They were past the last wharf and warehouse now, plowing along Galleon Beach, the deep, soft sand pulling at their feet. The moon was near its setting and gave a dim, uncertain light. Barring their path, with upraised weapons and casting monstrous shadows, loomed a mass of armed men.

"The soldiers!" screamed a faint-hearted seaman. "We are lost, mates!"

"Out cutlasses!" croaked Panama Williams, as loudly as he could, wishing he had spared his breath instead of talking to that boy. "Follow me, lads, and cut the lubbers down!"

"Put up your blades!" countermanded a familiar voice from the ranks before them.

" 'Tis Lockwood!" shouted the men from the tavern. "Lockwood! Lockwood!"

"With the lads from Coral Cove!" sang Stephen lustily, throwing his arms about and jumping as high as he could. He had never behaved like this before, and did not know he was doing it now.

"How many men have you Mr. Williams?" asked the captain.

"Eighteen, sir, besides Mr. Pringle."

"Good. I have twenty-seven. There are fishing boats enough for us all, drawn up on the beach yonder. We must run them down

and shove off without delay. Who gave the alarm?"

"A soldier from the Hall, they told me. But how he escaped—"

They ran for the boats, snatched them loose and began to shove them down the beach to the water's edge. But it was two hours past flood and the ebb had run far out. They were barely halfway to the water, when out of the town gate shot the head of a column of infantry at the double, their shouldered firelocks glinting in the moonlight.

"Halt!" boomed the tremendous bass voice of Captain Cary Tompkins. "Halt! In the King's name!"

But instead of halting the seaman redoubled their efforts.

"Halt, or we fire!" boomed the warning, and Captain Tompkins, on the word began bringing his company into line.

"Down on your faces, men!" came the quick command from Captain Lockwood.

THE sailors threw themselves flat on the sand, just as the volley rang out. A storm of musket-balls whistled past, splintering gunwales and kicking up sand, but doing no worse harm. Up jumped the seamen with a derisive cheer and shoved on, faster than before.

"Give 'em the bayonet, sir! They'll be afloat afore you can reload!" implored a high-pitched voice from the file-closers.

"Forward the Town Guard!" bellowed Tompkins, before he realized his men had no bayonets, so compelling had been the voice from the ranks. He lost a few precious moments being ashamed before the little sergeant of regulars that his militiamen were not better armed.

But the men had not moved to respond to their captain's command. They had no liking for the broad cutlass blades they could see flashing in and out among the boats that were now being swiftly manned and shoved off. Far in advance of his men, not looking back to see if they followed, the valorous captain waded out into the surf, brandishing his sword, and shouting—

"Down with your arms, knaves!"

"Down they come!" chirruped Panama Williams, laying the flat of his cutlass emphatically across the top of Captain Cary Tompkins's big three-cornered hat. Half-stunned by the blow, poor Tompkins collapsed in three feet of water, only his head sticking out, and that completely hidden, wedged tight inside his cocked hat.

Demoralized by their captain's fall, the Town Guard stood, fumbling with their unloaded flintlocks, at a safe distance up the beach.

"Come on, you double-dash-dotted mildewed militiamen!" yelled the wiry little red-coated sergeant who had suggested the bayonet. He was swearing as only a Flanders veteran could and swinging the long-hafted halberd that was the insignia of his rank. Out into the surf he ran and hooked the curved ax-blade of his weapon into the stern-sheets of the last-departing boat.

"Give us a hand!" he shouted, as he braced his feet, only to be pulled off them and lifted aboard by John Lockwood's iron strength.

"Give way!" commanded Lockwood to his sailors.

The oars dipped and out they pulled into the harbor. When the flotilla was well under way, Lockwood examined his now disarmed prisoner.

"Didn't I see you scrambling over my garden wall not long since?" he asked.

Nimble Dick admitted impudently that he had.

"How on earth did you get out again?"

"Easy enough," answered Nimble Dick, not so much through modesty as through a wish to belittle the cunning of his captors. "Had 'em link their belts together and lower me to the bottom of that there cleft, an' then I climbed up t'other side."

"You're the first man who ever climbed it," said Lockwood, with an open admiration that soothed the sergeant somewhat. "You'll thrive at sea. I need somebody like you to turn my topmen into straight-shooting musketeers."

"I be a King's man," retorted the little sergeant proudly. "You can hang me to the yardarm or make me walk the plank, but I'll never turn pirate."

In proof of which he twisted about and shouted in the direction of the *Swiftsure*, rousing the bailiffs on board:

"Pirates! Pirates! Turn out the guard!"

"Whazzat?" demanded a drowsy, muzzy voice from the anchored ship.

There was a good deal of muffled laughter from Lockwood's men, but no further word from the effectively silenced Nimble Dick. The hubbub ashore had evidently not

prevailed against the torpor induced by English rum. But as the boats dashed up alongside, the bailiff in charge issued a solemn warning:

"Keep off! Ye can't come aboard without an order from the court!"

"Drop that musket!" was Lockwood's reply, as he sprang up into the lee forechains and over the rail of his own ship.

"Bundle that lubber into a boat, Mr. Williams. Roust out the other bailiffs, dump them in after him, and shove them off." He told off several seamen to help at this, their first task aboard.

"Stand by to cut the cable! Lay aloft sail loosers! Lay out and loose! Man the tops'l sheets and halliards! Focsle men, loose sprits'l and sprit-tops'l!"

Nimbly the practised seamen sprang to their stations.

"Stand by! Let fall! Sheet home! Lay in! Lay down from aloft!"

"Head-sails a-box, sir," reported the officer of the forecastle.

"Cut away bower cable!" commanded Lockwood. "Give her a sheer with the helm!"

An ax chopped through the thick hempen anchor-cable. With the head-sails paying her head around, the *Swiftsure* swung about till she was set for the harbor mouth. For a ship of that period, without jibs and carrying a huge lateen on her mizzen instead of the modern spanker, she was uncommonly handy. Luckily the ebb was running strong and the wind fair for standing out of the harbor.

Under all plain sail, the *Swiftsure* went booming down the bay, till she came to the fort at the harbor's mouth. Roused by the clamor in the town and the firing on the beach, the officer in command of the handful of convalescents left in garrison had manned and loaded the guns of the water-battery. Those aboard the *Swiftsure* could see the red sparks flying from the lighted linstocks as their ship drew abreast of the embrasures.

"Ship ahoy! What ship is that?" rang the challenge from the fort.

"The *Swiftsure*, John Lockwood master, outward bound."

"Put back or we fire! I forbid you to leave port! In the King's name!"

"God save the King!" answered Lockwood loyally, but carrying on.

"Fire!"

Bursting flames stabbed through the night, as the water-battery thundered a shotted salvo. Its guns, however, were obsolete, worn-out Spanish culverins; awkward pieces to aim. Three round-shot plumped through the *Swiftsure's* straining courses, and another carried away her great stern-lantern, but the rest hurtled harmlessly past overhead.

Before the gunners ashore could reload their pieces, the *Swiftsure* was safe past and running out to the open sea.

CHAPTER IX

THE STOWAWAY

KEEPING just over the horizon-line and out of sight of St. Luke's from dawn till sunset next day, the *Swiftsure* fetched a long, leisurely compass about the island. After sundown she ran in and dropped anchor off Inverness, with three lights burning low on each quarter.

"Rig the flares, bend whips to the fore and main yards, and stand by to take on stores when the sloops come alongside," were the orders issued by the captain to his first mate. "It's calm enough for them to make fast under our lee."

Almost before they were ready for her, the first big sloop ranged up alongside, deep laden with barrels of salt pork and beef and bags of hardtack. A slender figure standing by the sloop's mast made a leap for the Jacob's ladder and swarmed nimbly up the *Swiftsure's* tall side, despite the handicap of petticoats. She sprang aboard, almost plump into her father's surprzied arms.

"Come aboard, sir," said Rose, with a nautical tug at her forelock.

She flung her arms around her father's neck, kissing his face and neck all about his nicely trimmed beard, laughing and mischievous. She pushed him off at arm's length, gripping him with both her strong, slim hands. "Now that I am here," she implored, "please let me stay!"

At her request the smile left his face, and he opened his lips to speak. But Rose instantly clapped both her hands firmly over his mouth, informing him: "You sha'n't say a word till you're ready to say *yes*."

He removed her hands.

"You know very well you shouldn't have come aboard, Rose," he said; "and back you must go to Inverness as soon this sloop

is unloaded, and ashore you stay till further orders." He turned to Malcolm McDougal, who had followed Rose up the ladder. "I'm ashamed of you, sir, for letting her wheedle you into bringing her aboard."

"She's a braw wheedler, sir," admitted the second mate, with a rueful grin.

"Who's taking your sloop back to shore?" asked Lockwood.

"Auld Angus McBane."

"Dour Angus, the woman-proof man, eh? Send him to me."

A scowling, bent old Scot, with enormous bristling white eye-brows, reported to the skipper.

"McBane you're to take Miss Lockwood back with you to Inverness and see that she stays there till we sail. Can I depend on you for this?" He caught his daughter's eyes fixed upon him, calmly. She smiled at him.

"Aye!" promised Dour Angus, with unction. He glowered at Rose, who rewarded him with a sweet and reasonable look. Her father knew it was not her way to make a fuss over what she couldn't help, but to old Angus her sweetness, her very beauty, was guile. The one thing he came nearest to liking where women were concerned was the privilege of keeping them in subjection. He knew Rose by reputation, and warmed to his task.

All too soon for the skipper's daughter the last of the stores were hoisted out and she had to go overside into the waiting sloop, whose depleted crew promptly cast off to make room for the other provision boats now putting out from shore.

"Bide there," rumbled Dour Angus, pointing the finger of authority to the seat next himself where he sat at the tiller.

Rose seated herself graciously, but with an air of abstraction, having settled on her line of conduct. She would ignore the old man's domineering manner.

"A lass gi'ed me the go-by, aince, but ye'll no do the same the nicht," he assured her.

Rose smiled absently at him, as if she was hardly conscious that he spoke. Silent she sat, looking astern at the rapidly receding lights of the ship, as the sloop ran back before the wind to Inverness Loch. They were nearly there and the *Swiftsure* lay far to seaward, when Rose was abruptly roused by a wild yell from one of the hands forward.

"Sheer off! Sheer off, or ye'll rin us doon!" screamed old Angus.

Turning her head, the girl saw the long bowsprit of another sloop come lunging straight for where she sat beside Angus McBane. The sun was completely down, the moon not yet risen, and, sailing without lights, the two crafts were on the point of colliding in the dark. The stranger was on the port tack and her long mainboom fouled McBane's starboard shrouds, causing each boat to swing round with a creaking and snapping from strained shrouds, amid a roar of Scotch and Gaelic from both crews.

"Shove them off! Dinna let them cut oor gear!" shouted McBane.

But just then some one leaned far over the side of the other sloop and swung out a prodigiously long arm with a prodigiously long claymore at the end of it. The nearest three inches of that mighty blade clipped the stout tarred hemp like silken threads.

Thus unscrupulously freed, the stranger slid past astern, her starboard rail a scant eighteen inches from McBane's starboard quarter.

"Good-by, Dour Angus!" sang Rose, as she gathered up her skirts and jumped. She came down on a pile of full biscuit sacks stowed on the other sloop's foredeck and burrowed into it. They must be stores for the *Swiftsure*. She was on her way back!

Had she been seen, or had the mainsail hidden her from her crew and passengers, who were all abaft the mast, roaring with laughter at McBane's misfortunes? McBane was yelling at the top of his cracked old voice, demanding the surrender of Rose. But no word could he get through the din of merriment aboard the other sloop. The men laughed and shouted defiance, thinking the old fellow was calling maledictions down on them, and, in truth, he was doing that, too.

Listening anxiously, Rose heard the mirth change to gasps of dismay.

"McBane's carried awa' his mast!" cried a seaman.

"The daft auld loon, tryin' for tae gybe her roond, wi'oot ony weather shrouds!" criticised another.

"Wull we pit back an' pick him oop, skipper?" asked a third.

Rose understood that McBane, in his haste to come about and overhaul the sloop she was on, in order to regain possession of her, had attempted to gybe, and the sudden

strain had been too much for a mast that had just lost half its standing-rigging. Her heart in her mouth, she waited for the decision of the unseen skipper.

"Aweel," he drawled presently, "let Dour Angus bide and drift a wee. He'll come to na great harm, an I maun push on the noo an' set you wild lads aboard the *Swiftsure*."

Rose drew a long breath.

"Spoke like a skilly skipper!" applauded one of the "wild lads."

The rest caught up the phrase and began to sing:

"The King sat in Dunfermlin Toon,
Drinkin' the bluid-red wine.
"Oh where shall I get me a skilly skipper
Tae sail this guid ship o' mine?"

They were a merry, noisy crew, for which the stowaway was thankful. She had her end of the boat to herself and was wondering what she was going to do. The temptation to give Dour Angus the "go-by" had been more than she could resist when the opportunity came so pat; but what would her father do when he saw her again? Send her back in irons? He'd want to, at any rate. How she wanted to sail with him, and just because she was a girl he wouldn't take her! Her mind reverted to Stephen Pringle and the fact that she could be a more useful hand aboard than he. It was all so absurd. If she had only gone on board in disguise! Rose's recent exploits had gone to her head.

She began to enlarge her hole, and groped about with her hands all over the sacks as far as she dared. When she touched some softer than the rest, she almost cried out in joy. The sailors' sea-bags! Perhaps a pair of "breeks" in one. Deftly she untied the nearest and found what she sought. With ruthless fingers she pulled open the fastenings of her summer frock, tore off her skirts, and stepped into the breeches. She found a strong shirt, and slipped into that. Smoothing her hair close to her head, she bound it beneath a seaman's kerchief, carefully tucking every hair well out of sight. As she was about to cast her own clothes overboard, her hand was arrested by the thought that if they were washed ashore the good folk of Inverness would think that she had been drowned. She weighted the bundle with a pair of heavy shoes from the rifled bag and sank it quietly under the water.

THE sloop was preparing to range up alongside the *Swiftsure*. The crew, still singing and waving their naked claymores that flashed red in the light of the flares, roared in chorus:

"Tae Norroway, tae Norroway,
Tae Norroway o'er the faem,
The King's dochter o' Norroway,
'Tis we mun bring her hame."

In a moment they would break and scramble for their sea-bags, and she would be the center of a furor that would lead to discovery. None too soon Rose slipped over the far side of the sloop, noiselessly, and swam away into the deep shadows outside the belt of wavering red light thrown by the smoking flares. She was a good swimmer, and the water was warm and not too rough.

Swimming aft and away from the bustle and glare amidships, Rose was rounding the *Swiftsure's* port quarter trying to think what she would do next. If she waited for the last sloop, perhaps she could edge in among its crew, and amid the general excitement of stowing goods and shoving off, she might be able to hide somewhere till the next day.

How big the *Swiftsure* seemed, swimming around close-in to the bulge of her like this! As she looked up and down the height of the hull, she saw one of the three lanterns that hung low down begin to rise in the air. Up it went till it reached the quarter-gallery, a picturesque little balcony built out from the ship's stern, on a level with the sills of the cabin windows. As the lantern was lifted over the rail, it lit the face of the man who was hauling it in.

"Stephen!" called Rose softly.

At the sound of her voice Stephen started and nearly dropped the lantern overboard. Clutching at the gallery rail, he stared wildly astern, and then up at the poop.

"Down here—in the water, Stephen," laughed Rose.

Looking down he saw, by the light of the two remaining lanterns, her face smiling placidly up at him out of the sea.

"Rose!" He tore off his coat and threw one leg over the balustrade, when Rose stopped him with cries of:

"No, no! Go back! Stay where you are!" She trembled lest her voice attract the attention of the quarter-deck, but it was loud only to her own ears.

Still astride the rail, Stephen looked down at her, undecided.

"Knot those lantern-lines together," she directed, "and drop the end overside." She swam farther into the shadows until he should have done this, he first having to haul up the other two lanterns.

Stephen concluded that a girl who could give such cool commands was in no immediate danger. He flung himself back onto the balcony, and with clumsy haste began to execute her orders. When he had all ready, he threw one end of the line overboard, calling:

"Take hold and I will pull you up!"

"You couldn't lift me half the distance, my lad," she declared calmly. "Haul that line up again, and knot it every foot or so. Then fling it to me, and I will show you how I can climb a rope."

He tied the line full of knots while she trod water. Having finished, he threw the line over and she caught it as it fell. Pulling herself up with lithe strength from knot to knot, she reached the rail where Stephen stood waiting to help her over.

"Thank you," she said demurely, releasing her hands from his grasp and stamping her bare feet on the floor.

She was soon standing in pools of water from the rivulets that ran from her wet clothes. And such clothes! Stephen was so full of questions and exclamations no one could overcome the others and get to his lips. The girl was looking at the knots he had tied.

"Grannies!" she said scornfully. "I'll teach you your knots, bends and hitches, Stephen," she promised. She gave a different sort of hitch at her own "breeks," which were very large.

"Stephen," she smiled, "hast seen a white bread-bag with 'Fine Cabin Biscuit' writ on it in fair, large print?"

"I put such a bag in the galley just now, before I was sent below to douse these lanterns. Are you hungry?"

Rose gurgled merrily. "Small nourishment I'd derive from that bag, an' I were," she said. "But you see, on the chance of persuading my father to take me with him, once I was aboard, I put in that bag every spare stitch that I brought from Lockwood Hall. Fetch it to my berth, please, Stephen —larbord side, forward. Won't it be fun to see my father's face when we meet at breakfast!"

For a desperate minute Stephen weighed his duty to Captain Lockwood. There was ample time to return Rose again to Inverness. On the other hand, he did not want to do a thing that would make her hate him forever.

He went off to look for the white bread-bag, marked in fair, large print "Fine Cabin Biscuit." He went, feeling as he imagined his father might have felt on such an occasion, when Sir Bellamy was "a young gallant, back in King William's reign." His heart was thumping so, it disturbed him. Could it be that Captain Lockwood was mistaken, and there *was* some dangerous weakness in that organ?

Part II

CHAPTER I

OFF MANGROVE KEY

NINE days and nights out of St. Luke's the *Swiftsure* moved quietly over a smooth sea on the course for Mangrove Key. For a week she had tumbled along against strong headwinds, greatly to the discomfort of Stephen Pringle. The first few days had been a hideous complex of agonies for him; seasickness, sunburn and blisters which the salt spray burned like acid, flayed palms, aching muscles, and, to crown all, a humiliating sense of utter incompetence. Time and again he had been tempted to give it all up and descend to being a mere passenger. But the dread of Rose Lockwood's scorn, or worse, her pitying sisterlike patronage, kept him at his new work. He was determined she should not look down on him.

The tenth dawn was beginning to light the dull sea, when—

"Land ho!" cried a dozen voices from all parts of the ship.

"Mangrove Key," announced Captain Lockwood, after a brief glance at the island off to leeward.

Here and there a patch of beach flashed like silver in the rising sun. For the most part the swampy lowlands were covered, down to low water-mark with the gray-green of the myriad-rooted mangrove which loves salt water. On the higher ground inland, hundreds of coco-palms were outlined against the sky. But of man and his works there was no sign. The cove was empty; no boats were on the beach.

"Looks deserted," commented Panama

Williams; "no lights last night, no smoke this morning."

"Probably is deserted," assented the Captain of the *Swiftsure*. "We'll begin our search by going ashore and overhauling the place where the pirates we left there must have camped. Pirates are an untidy lot, and will likely have left clues behind. We'll put into the cove where we found the *William and Mary*, and send a couple of armed boats to shore with a landing party."

"Sail ho!" shouted Stephen, from the fore cross-trees.

"Where away?" called Captain Lockwood.

"Two-three points off the larboard bow, sir. Looks like a sloop. I caught the flash of the sun on her sails as she — as she — as she turned around, sir."

"Came about, you lubber, came about!" corrected Panama Williams. The old buccaneer focussed his long glass on the white speck that he would have found for himself in another minute.

"A sloop she is," he corroborated. "A St. Luke's turtler, by the look of her, and heading back for Mangrove Key. If we hold our course, sir, we'll cut her off and pick them up in half a glass."

"Hold the course," commanded Lockwood. "Send a hand aloft to relieve young Pringle. How does he take to his schooling?"

"He's as weak as a cat and as clumsy as a cow," averred the first mate. "But between me and Rose, we'll make a corpse or a seaman of him yet. She's hazing him something cruel—see there, sir!"

Captain Lockwood looked to where Stephen was descending the fore-shrouds, feeling well-pleased with himself: he had sighted a sail before any one else on board, and had just remembered for the first time to swing over the edge of the fore-top instead of squeezing through the "lubber's hole."

But alas for Stephen! Even as he was preening his pride with this happy knowledge, his eye caught the flash of a white dress darting out of the cabin door and the voice of Rose came up to him, full of warning:

"Grip the shrouds, lad, grip the shrouds! Haven't I told you not to hold on by the ratlins when you go aloft? Some day a rotten one will give way beneath your hand, and down you'll go headforemost into the sea or on the deck."

"What's that?" asked Stephen anxiously, stopping and looking down.

"Don't stand there gaping! On deck with you and lay aft! Don't keep Mr. Williams waiting," was the girl's brisk reply.

"But he isn't waiting—he hasn't sent for me," argued Stephen, obeying nevertheless. He leapt the final yard to the deck and stood before the captain's daughter.

He looked taller than she remembered him to have looked on shore, even surrounded as he was by the immensity of the sea. The whiteness of skin, which had distinguished the Stephen of the study and law court, had turned red in sun and wind, and the red was now turning to brown. He had been sleeping, working, learning, and eating —except for the first thirty-six hours—with an intensity he had never known before. His hands were toughening into calluses, his bones no longer cried out at every movement, and his arms and back were beginning to feel a strength such as he had never dreamed he could possess.

"Come here," said Rose, "and make those knots and hitches I showed you yesterday."

"I'm afraid I can't remember all of them," Stephen apologised. "I had no time to practise till I went off watch, and then I always fell asleep." His fingers were snarling a rope's end into a shapeless tangle.

"That is not the way," Rose said; "give it to me and watch my fingers closely."

Stephen liked this, and wondered how long he could keep from learning and be invited "to watch her fingers closely."

"Rose!" called her father suddenly from the poop. "Go to your berth and stay there till I send for you."

She went immediately and without a word. However unmanageable she might be on shore, Stephen observed that, on deck at least, her obedience to the officers of the ship was a fine example to the rest.

Stephen saw Captain Lockwood hand the spy-glass to the first mate and heard him say

"There are thirty-odd men in that sloop, Mr. Williams, and half of them are as naked as Adam before the fall."

The *Swiftsure* sent a shot across the bows of the sloop and the strange crew of brown-skinned, shaggy-headed individuals brought their craft alongside in response to a command shouted from the poop of the ship. They looked anxiously up at the *Swiftsure's* crowded rail. Nothing showed them to be white men except that many were blond

and all were bearded. Nine of them were wearing shirts, perhaps as many more had breeches. Only one man wore both.

"What sloop is that?" demanded Captain Lockwood.

"The *Lively Lass* of St. Luke's, sir," answered the clothed man, who seemed to be in command.

"You're not St. Luke's men," said the skipper, looking at them narrowly. "How came you in possession of that sloop?"

The man told a tale of how they had been captured by pirates, who took their ship and marooned them on Mangrove Key. The pirates would come there to careen and rest between their cruises. Because he and his men had refused to sign the articles of the pirates, he said, they had been stripped stark naked and made slaves.

"They made us scrape the bottom of their ship, sir, and build huts for them to live in when they were ashore. When we built one for ourselves in their absence, they set the thatch on fire at night as we slept, and drubbed us with the flat of their cutlasses as we ran forth."

"How do you happen to be out in the sloop?"

"We were trying to escape, sir," replied the man. "Yesterday this sloop was out with some of Red Culliford's men, who brought news of a slow, rich merchantman in the Bahama channel. Culliford—he is the pirate captain, sir—put to sea, leaving the sloop behind and ten of his men, well armed, to keep us from making away with her. They penned us into the largest hut, with two sentries to watch us through the open door. But they couldn't see all that we did after night fell. With our hands, and with some of the big shells they used for dishes, we made a tunnel through the sand under the bottom of the rear wall. Four of us wriggled through it, crept round in the dark to where the sentries were and had our fingers on their throats before they could cry an alarm.

"With the two muskets and hangers of the sentries, and with sticks from a pile of firewood we had started for the pirates, the whole crew of us fell on the other eight, over their rum by a fire, at the far end of the clearing, where they could watch the sea. 'Twas all over before they could pull trigger or draw blade. Four we clubbed to death, four we stripped and chased into the woods. Then we stowed aboard the sloop what stores we could find, doused the fire, and put to sea. The wind was light and we were still in sight of the island at dawn."

"Why did you put back when you sighted this ship?"

"We took her for the *Ruthless*, Red Culliford's ship. Afloat we had no chance with him, but we know the woods better than the pirates do," was the answer.

"Is the *Ruthless* the ship that captured yours?"

"It was four of her boats that clapped us aboard when we were becalmed at night, sir, in the Bahama Channel. They were out spying about while the *Ruthless* was being careened at Mangrove Key."

John Lockwood's mind was recalling the pitiable derelict they had picked up on their last voyage, whose ship, becalmed, had been surprized at night in the Bahama Channel.

"After that," the speaker in the sloop continued, "they set us to building huts inland, and after that, they said, we would be set to work unloading our own ship. But we never saw our own ship again, sir."

"How was that?"

"A privateer put into the cove, drove the prize-crew ashore, and made off with it."

"The name of your ship?" asked Captain Lockwood.

"*William and Mary*, of Bristol, sir."

Though he knew the answer before it was spoken, John Lockwood felt a prickle of emotion all over his body, and it was some moments before he could speak; then:

"You are the *William and Mary's* crew?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come aboard."

CHAPTER II

CAUGHT

THE skipper of the *Virgin Queen*, St. Luke's Town to London, shook his head despondently.

"She's overhauling us fast, Mr. Burgess," he said. "Before the watch-glass is turned again her bow-chasers will be within range."

The Honorable Peter Burgess,—ship owner, prominent merchant, and councilor of St. Luke's,—looked at the scanty canvass and clumsily pitching hull of the *Virgin Queen*, old, high-pooped and dumpling-bowed; and then astern at the tall, graceful craft that followed so swiftly in her wake.

Even a landsman's eye could see how hopeless was the race.

"Can't we beat her off?" the owner asked, his clay-colored visage sharp with anxiety.

"Not with these trumpery pots of iron four-pounders, which are all we carry," the skipper answered in a kind of patient scorn. "I've asked you many a time for more men and heavier guns, Mr. Burgess, and if we ever see St. Luke's Town again, I hope you'll remember how much you want 'em now."

The skipper saw the fear in the eyes of his mean-hearted employer and took a grim pleasure in pointing out to him the long eighteen glinting on the forecastle of the ship astern.

"And I'll warrant she has a dozen twelve-pounders on either broadside," he said, in glum resignation.

"Throw over some of the cargo! Lighten the ship!" urged Mr. Thomas Courant, fellow councilor and bosom friend of the owner.

"Aye, over with it!" Peter Burgess commanded, though his thrifty heart ached at the thought of the loss.

"'Twould be worse than useless," the Captain answered. "We could not get rid of enough to better our speed one knot before she could overtake us. And besides, Mr. Burgess, such an act would only infuriate the pirates, and that our crew knows as well as I do. If I gave such a command, they would refuse to obey. Look at their faces—those men won't fight."

"The cowardly, mutinous dogs!" muttered Burgess.

"Dogs they are," agreed the skipper, "and, begging your pardon, sir, dogs you have made them. Now that we're as good as sewed up and dropped overboard in the same shotted hammock, Mr. Burgess, I'm not afraid to tell you to your face, sir, that it's owners like you, with their rotten beef and weevilly biscuit, crank ships and clipped pay—they are the ones who make their skippers drive their crews so hard they drive them on the account, sir!"

Mr. Burgess's captain was a tall man, strongly framed, and had obeyed orders from the small, weazened merchant that had made his gorge rise time and again. Now he was evening the score, feeling that it was very likely the last satisfaction he would get out of life. He went on twisting the knife:

"Do you expect that crowd forward to fight for you with four-pounders against long-eighteens?" he asked. "Or to cross cutlasses at close quarters with three times their number? They're more likely to heave a line to the first boatful of pirates that comes alongside, and sign with them afterward. If I were not a good Christian, Mr. Burgess," he added gloomily, "I'd clap a pistol to my head and pull trigger, when I think of what's in store for owner and skipper, if they take us alive. I'll try to die fighting on my own quarter-deck—sooner than be marooned or tortured to death."

"Tortured to—" The words died on Peter Burgess's whitening lips.

Mr. Thomas Courant—tall, dark, grave looking, elegant—looked on, listening tensely, but with entire self-possession.

"It was ever Red Culliford's way with captured owners and skippers," the officer lamented, and could not understand the extraordinary change that came over the frightened face of Mr. Burgess. It was not the wont of cowards to smile at the name of Red Culliford, and yet that was certainly a smile, quick as its passage had been, which the skipper saw Mr. Burgess flash to Mr. Courant.

"Red Culliford!" exclaimed Thomas Courant's cool voice. "Is that his ship following us?"

"Aye, the *Ruthless*."

But the faces of the two merchants did not blanch with terror as they watched the ship of the cruellest sea-rover afloat gain on the *Virgin Queen*.

"He's altered her rig," observed the skipper, wondering if they doubted his knowledge of the approaching craft; "but I know her now."

The owner of the *Virgin Queen* withdrew with his friend to the farthest corner of the poop.

"Do you think he will recognize us and sheer off?" Thomas Courant whispered.

"Assuredly!" affirmed Burgess in equally lower tones. "Curse that canting hypocrite of a captain! I'll send him packing as soon as we drop anchor in Blackpool. Aye, Culliford knows the *Virgin Queen* well. She's forty years old, and there's not such another hulking galleon under English colors in these waters." He looked about the old tub affectionately. "I bought her cheap"—that was mainly what endeared the ship to him—"from the buccaneers who captured her from the Spaniards in eighty-five. 'Tis true," he winked, "we were then at peace with Spain, but not below the Line! Ah,

Tommy, those were the brave old days! Do you remember the times on Galleon Beach?"

"Not if I can help it," returned Courant with a patrician shudder. "I'm praying to get safely back to England and forever away from St. Luke's and all its memories." He glanced astern and knitted his brows at the on-coming ship. "Peter," he said, "I don't like the way that fellow keeps following us. Would he dare to play us false?"

"Not he!" Burgess declared. "Red Culliford will dare more than other men, but Simon Price has him safe and fast. St. Luke's is a rich and safe mart for Culliford, and Simon Price is master of St. Luke's. Watch his head-sails. In a minute you'll see him veer—"

"Look!" gasped Courant, surprized out of his self-control and grasping his friend's arm rigidly.

A puff of smoke rose suddenly from the pirate's forecastle, swelled to a cloud and came flying toward them down the wind, shredding and melting away to nothingness as it came. A heavy report reached their ears and a tall white column of spray spouted upward in the *Virgin Queen's* wake, a scant ten fathoms astern.

"He's firing on us!" screamed Burgess. "He's attacking us! Red Culliford's played us false! The—!"

Over and over again, with the mounting shrillness of hysteria, he shrieked the same trite epithet. Thomas Courant had never before seen his friend at bay with bodily danger. Disgusted, he took the fear-crazed little man by the shoulders and shook him into silence.

"You're cursing the wrong man, Peter," he breathed in his ear, "you're cursing the wrong man. Red Culliford's but a tool—you and I are naught but tools of the same master brain. We were mad to go to Price the day Lockwood was reprieved; we but put ourselves in his power. He saw we were frightened, and he knew we were as deep in the matter as he. He feared the one or both of us would turn King's evidence. He foxed us into sailing for England and, by Heaven! He's told Culliford to catch us and cut our throats."

With a great groan, Peter Burgess, his hysterics rising again, sank down on his knees and began to pray for the first time in many a sinful year:

"O Lord, have mercy upon us! O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners! Deliver us from the hands of our enemies—"

"Amen!" broke in the deep voice of the Captain. Look yonder and behold the mercy and the vengeance of the Lord!"

OUT of a driving rain-squall that had concealed her approach came a beautiful black-hulled ship flying English colors. With the wind on her starboard quarter and carrying a mighty press of sail, she bore gallantly down on pursuer and pursued. The sunlight, reflected from her rain-wet top-sides flashed on a long row of brazen muzzles, as the ports were thrown open and the guns run out.

"What ship is that?" asked Thomas Courant, "I've seen her before somewhere."

"She lay in St. Luke's harbor when we sailed," the skipper replied. "But now she has overtaken us—an easy task for such a craft." He passed his glass to the owner of the *Virgin Queen*.

"The *Swiftsure!*" Burgess's voice rose on the name in a high wail. "John Lockwood has put to sea and hunted us down! Heave to, Captain! Strike your colors! Fire a lee gun! Surrender to Red Culliford before John Lockwood lays us aboard! Better Satan's mercy than his!"

As fast as his trembling legs could carry him, Peter Burgess staggered to where the color halliards were belayed to a cleat on the after rail. His trembling hands fumbled at the ropes.

"Wait! Wait!" Thomas Courant called, rushing after him and laying restraining hands on the other's wrists, while the Captain and the two helmsmen watched the gentlemen in bewilderment.

At that moment the pirate's bow-chaser spoke again. An eighteen-pound shot struck squarely against the *Virgin Queen's* mizzen-mast, a hand's breadth below the slings of the huge old-fashioned lateen-yard. Skipper and seamen sprang aside barely in time to save their lives: the great spar with all its gear and sails fell, crashing athwart the poop.

Burgess and Courant, too intent on their struggle with each other to look up or heed the shouts of warning, were caught like rabbits under a dead-fall. Where they had stood, contending, was now a shapeless mound of shattered wood, torn canvas, and tangled rigging.

From beneath the wreckage a small, bright-red stream came slowly, very slowly, seemed to pause, gathered volume and trickled down into the scuppers.

CHAPTER III

STEPHEN, THE MAN

"WHERE is your cutlass, Pringle?" demanded Captain Lockwood.

"There was none left when I asked for one, sir. The last of the small arms had already been served out to the men from the *William and Mary*."

"H'm," the Captain mused. "You can't go into action without a blade. Ten to one, there'll be close fighting. I remember seeing a small-sword somewhere in the cabin, since we sailed. Go and find it."

Stephen ran nimbly aft, anxious to find the weapon before the impending battle began. The *Swiftsure's* cabin floor was level with the waist, the poop of those days having ample head-room. Stephen opened the door and dashed in; a lurch of the ship banged the door shut behind him.

The cabin was sufficiently lighted by the small-paned stern-windows and the skylight in the quarter-deck above. A long fixed table occupied most of the floor space. Three doors in the fore-and-aft bulkheads on either hand led to the berths—tiny sleeping-compartments, the rude forerunners of the modern stateroom, each barely large enough to contain a slung hammock or the narrowest of bunks. These six cubby-holes were occupied by Captain Lockwood, Panama Williams, Malcolm McDougal, Mr. Bass—ex-boatswain of the *William and Mary* and now third mate of the *Swiftsure*—Stephen himself, and Rose Lockwood.

The door of her room opened a few inches and Rose peeped out.

"Oh, it's you, Stephen. Is the *Virgin Queen* safe?"

"Safe for the nonce and scudding before the wind, with her crew clearing away the wreckage of the mizzen. Your father thinks the fallen yard has broken the tiller, so that they cannot bring her up into the wind."

"'Tis very likely," said Rose, still showing only her head within the cabin. "Besides a galleon is steered as much by the lateen as by the rudder. If the *Virgin Queen* cannot luff, then we must fight the *Ruthless* alone. Is she still bearing down upon us?"

"Aye, cleared for action. We shall be within range soon." This recalled his errand to him, and he began searching in corners, under cushions, making a fair mess of the neat cabin in his haste.

"What are you looking for, Stephen?"

"The Captain sent me to find an extra small-sword that he saw somewhere in the cabin. Do you know where it is?"

"An extra small-sword?" she repeated. "My father brought only one aboard and that he wears constantly. The other officers and all the men have cutlasses. Has my father lost his sword?" She did not seem keen to find it, made no effort to help in the search, and continued to favor the cabin with a view of her head only.

"No, Captain Lockwood has his sword; but there is no weapon for me, and I must have one. Are you sure you have not seen another small-sword here?"

She looked at him for fully a minute, before she answered, deliberately: "No." Still no concern for his plight.

"You *have* seen one?" he guessed eagerly, disregarding the monosyllable and reading her manner. "Where is it?"

"Here!" Rose flung open her door and stepped out into the cabin.

Stephen stared. His sword—his own silver-hilted court-sword which she had taken from him and never returned—was girt to her hip, and her hand rested resolutely upon it.

She had brought it aboard in that long, tightly-packed bread-bag he himself had carried to her berth. She wore not only Stephen's sword-belt and sword, but his new pair of seaman's canvas knee-breeches, short and full, and his best shirt, articles he had bought from a young blade of a sailor on board by paying three prices for them. From Government House Stephen had brought only the clothing on his back, not foreseeing a longer journey than to Lockwood Hall and back. A pair of her own low-heeled shoes, silver-buckled, yarn stockings she had knit on the voyage, and a jaunty red sea-cap hiding the coiled masses of her gold-brown hair, finished her costume.

"Do I make a proper boy?" she asked with frank pride, flooding Stephen with one of her direct, unabashed looks.

"No," replied Stephen, with all his old ready truthfulness, "you do not."

Her figure was tall and athletic, but not a boy's. The darkness of night and the

thickness of a blue and silver coat had once concealed her sex well enough to deceive the dull eyes of Old Sawny and the duller wits of Captain Cary Tompkins. But the thin white cotton shirt, and in broad daylight, was not a disguise at all.

"You are not going on deck like that?" protested Stephen in alarm.

"Do you think I would skulk below?" she asked proudly.

"You do not mean that you intend to pit yourself in fight against pirates?"

"Why not?" the girl asked calmly, adding, with a trace of maliciousness, "I have fought before."

"Yes, and you would have been killed if the man you were fighting with had not by chance tripped and fallen. This will be a desperate battle, with great guns, and some of it at close quarters. If you appeared on deck, any pirate who saw you would know at a glance you were a girl, and fight ten times the harder to capture you for himself. There will be enough for you to do below decks, caring for the wounded."

"Stephen, my lad," said Rose, with some condescension, "the men on these ships look after each other's wounds. My father or Panama Williams could care for my wounds as well as I could care for theirs. I fear you have read too many romances, Stephen."

"If your father knew," began the young man, tacking in another direction.

"Don't you dare tell him!" Rose cried.

"I shall not tell him," Stephen answered, "because there will be no need. I can manage this myself. Go back at once to your berth and stay there until you are called. And before you go, give me my sword."

Rose Lockwood folded her arms and burst into a laugh that rang like music through the cabin. Her cold blue eyes swept him proudly, from his gaily kerchiefed head to his bare, sun-browned feet.

"Who are you," demanded Rose, "to give me orders on my father's ship? Go forward to your station!" She emphasized the imperious gesture of her right hand toward the cabin door with a slight stamp of her silver-buckled shoe.

Ever since the beginning of the voyage, Stephen had indulged Rose's queenly manner toward him and obeyed her commands, both because of his new and intense desire to please her, and also because of his scholar's respect for knowledge and his desire to learn. She seemed to know everything about the sea and ships, and he knew nothing about either.

But now he felt that he was right and she was wrong. Feeling so, no one could be more firm than Stephen Pringle.

"Give me that sword," he repeated.

"Come and take it!" the girl replied.

She made no attempt to draw the blade, though she had plenty of time to draw it, and with it in her hand she could have put to flight any unarmed man. Crouching as she had been taught by her father and Panama Williams in her wrestling lessons, she watched him approach her.

STEPHEN must have that sword. He would come to grips with her for its possession, since she would have it so, and then make her go back to her berth and stay there till she was wanted elsewhere. He would treat her with all possible gentleness. Apologising in advance, he said, with a touch of the old Stephen of Government House—

"I vastly regret, Miss Lockwood, that you compel me to use force."

He came boldly at her. Rose sprang toward him. He had a brief impression of her beautiful face rushing toward his, cheeks flushed and eyes blazing with wrath. The vision flashed out as her cupped right hand struck and held his chin, bending it up and back, till he could see nothing but the skylight and the deck-beams overhead.

Her strong left arm, thrown behind the small of his back, caught and pinned both his arms to his sides. Instinctively Stephen moved back a bare heel to restore his imperilled balance. It struck and tripped over a small shod foot placed there for the purpose. As he swayed, a roll of the ship depressed the deck behind him and completed his over-throw. Down he went, both shoulders and the back of his head striking the uncarpeted cabin floor with a resounding thump.

Half-dazed by the shock, he made but little resistance when Rose, who had gone down on top of him, planted her knee firmly on his chest.

"The man does not live, Stephen Pringle, who can give me orders," the victor declared demurely.

In her tone—marvel and shame of it to

Stephen!—and in the eyes that looked down into his there was an unmistakable tinge of sadness and pity as well as of outraged pride and controlled anger.

Rising to her feet she stood over him where he lay on the cabin floor, staring up at her with bewildered eyes that suddenly overflowed with tears.

"Poor boy!" said Rose compassionately, dropping instantly to her knees beside him. "Did I hurt you?"

She had hurt him, was hurting him, far more than if she had struck the face with a red hot iron. What she had done and what she was saying to him burned him through and through. But the tears that filled his eyes were tears of rage.

He had been able to excuse his first defeat at Rose's hands, despite his father's harsh words. She had taken him from behind and unawares, bound him before he had time to resist, and he could do nothing to help himself, bound hand and foot to a great chair almost as heavy as himself. But now there was no excuse. Rose had met him face to face, fairly, and gripped and thrown him as easily as if he had been a little child.

The tears in his eyes and Rose's interpretation of them, turned his rage to fury. Stephen Pringle was fighting mad! Rose leapt to her feet, and stood on guard.

Heaving up on his left elbow, Stephen caught her sword-belt near the buckle with his right hand. This time it was Rose taken by surprize, so quick had been his action, the action not what she had expected. She was nearly pulled to her knees before she could shift her stance. Then she seized his wrist with her left hand and began to bend back his little finger with her right.

Stephen now threw up his left arm and obtained a second hold on the belt, close to the other side of the buckle. Rose gripped his left wrist with her right hand and braced herself to resist a downward pull.

But Stephen had a subtler thought. He was acquainted with the buckle of his own sword-belt. With a tug and a twist he unhooked the clasp; belt, slings, and sword dropped clattering to the floor, and a next roll of the ship sent them sliding into a far corner of the cabin.

"Oh!" Rose cried out, releasing one of Stephen's wrists and grasping at the belt too late.

In a flash she had recaptured the wrist. How quick she was! Still holding fast, she bent over him and forced him down upon his back, while she looked about for something to bind him with. Reading her look, Stephen boiled over with anger. Never would he let her make a helpless bundle of him again!

With the next lurch of the ship, he spun as he lay, throwing the upper half of himself to the right, the lower to the left. His legs struck Rose's ankles, knocked her feet out from under her, and brought her down sideways across his thighs. She could not get up without first letting go his wrists. The instant she opened her fingers, his right arm was about her shoulders, his left beneath her knees. Up he heaved himself and her—first to one knee, then to his feet.

Upright and triumphant, Stephen stood there, holding the dumbfounded but not inactive wrestler in his arms. She struggled with might and main and all her skill to free herself, to get her feet to the floor; but he held her fast.

"Put me down at once!" she commanded in a fury. "Put me down at once, or I will never speak to you again!"

Instead of putting her down, he carried her across the heaving floor in a staggering zig-zag course. Twice he was nearly thrown, once he was saved only by fetching up with his back against the cabin table. He was almost crippled by an unprepared-for bang against the table. At last he reached the door of her berth and squeezed through with his burden, who barked her squirming shins sharply against the door jamb and then decided to be quiet till she was within the berth.

Inside there was little more than standing room beside the high narrow bunk with its chest of drawers beneath. Stephen was exultant, feeling himself stronger than the girl in his arms. He had intended to place Rose gently on the bed, as gently as her struggles would let him, but even as he started to lower her to the quilts, a mysterious impulse made him tighten his arms, bend down his head, and kiss her lips.

Astounded and terrified at what he had done, Stephen let the lady drop. Fortunately she fell in the middle and not against the hard side of the bunk. He then turned swiftly back into the cabin. The door of the berth opened outward; with shaking fingers he withdrew the key from the inside of the lock and was about to replace it in

the outside, with the plain intent of locking her in.

"No, you don't, Stephen Pringle," said Rose, springing from the bed. She was in time to slip her foot between the door and the jamb, and stood braced against the bunk. "There is no need of treating me in this absurd way," she said with dignity. But her face was pale, her lips trembling.

Stephen was touched.

"You will give me your word to remain in your berth?" he asked.

"When I first showed myself to you in this rigging, Stephen," she answered, staring closely at him as if she was learning for the first time to know his face, "I knew by your eyes before we had exchanged a dozen words, that it would be folly for me to go on deck to fight hand to hand with unprincipled ruffians." The tears she blinked from her eyes were not tears of rage.

"Then why—"

"Why did I fight you? You brought it on yourself, lad. You tried to give me orders; not as man to man—that I could have stood; but as man to woman, arrogantly, and such I take from no man."

A tilt of the ship sent the sword rattling toward them across the bare boards. Rose was the quicker and picked it up. She drew it from the scabbard and presented it to Stephen, hilt first.

"To the victor," she said gently. "Take your sword, and use it well for my father—for my father's ship." She smiled at him with a glint of her old mischievousness.

Stephen was too shaken himself to notice that her voice was not quite steady. He found nothing to say. He sank to one knee, as was the fashion of the time, and kissed her hand.

"Up, lad, and away!" she exclaimed, with a wave of her hand.

He bounded from the cabin, buckling his sword on as he ran.

He was stronger than she was! She had acknowledged it! Nevermore need he blush to think he was weaker than a girl! She had struggled in his arms and could not get away! On the heels of his exultation came another thought—he was a ruffian, a brute. He had laid ungentle hands upon her—he had incontinently kissed her, Rose Lockwood, as high-spirited a maid as ever lived. She had been fine and gracious to him at the end, yet how she must hate him! She could not help hating him—a girl like that!

Why had he kissed her? He answered his own question: he loved her. That was why he had ridden so fast to Lockwood Hall to warn her father, that was why he had helped her smuggle herself aboard her father's ship, why he had submitted with content to her hazing, why he had dared her wrath to save her from danger. What a clumsy beast he had been, what a fool to think she could be treated like the bread-butter misses of St. Luke's Town!

Never mind now. He would rush into the midst of the foe and die surrounded by a ring of pirate slain! Then, at least, she would no longer hate him.

Stephen Pringle was in exactly the right frame of mind to enter a battle.

CHAPTER IV

HAND TO HAND

"I THOUGHT Red Culliford had a master-gunner aboard when he brought down the *Virgin Queen's* buena-ventura-yard; but seems 'twas only a lucky shot," Stephen observed to Panama Williams, as another eighteen-pound ball from the oncoming pirate's bow-chaser flew harmlessly over the *Swiftsure's* maintruck.

"Pirates always fire high, 'tis well known," answered the ex-buccaneer.

"And why shouldn't they?" guessed Stephen. "What would it profit them to sink a ship or burn a city before they'd plundered it?"

"Aye, aye, lad; cripple and take—that's ever the rover's way."

"I'll show them a new way," interposed Captain Lockwood. "Lay forward and make sure that every gun-captain has depressed his piece as commanded, Mr. Williams. Then lay the pivot-gun with your own hands, and stand by to rake their poop when I give the word. Stephen, to Number Four gun! I knew you'd find a small-sword in the cabin."

Stephen ran off to his station.

The two ships were rapidly approaching each other, the *Ruthless* with the wind on her port, the *Swiftsure* close-hauled on the starboard tack. Each was cleared for action, courses furled, decks sanded, and guns run out. The *Virgin Queen* lay hove-to a couple of miles to leeward, under repairs and out of the fight. The enemy ships were fairly well matched, except that the

pirate had the weighty advantage of the weather-gage.

"He'll rake us," muttered a pessimist from the *William and Mary*, as he leaned on a sponge-staff and peered through a gun-port. "He'll cross our wake and batter in our stern-works, mark my words."

"How could he do that?" asked Stephen, whose duty it was to pass powder charges to Number Four, a gun in the starboard battery. The gunner gave him a sour glance.

"How, young Jack-o'-the-dust? In a jiffy we'll meet and pass, a musket-shot apart, and trade broadsides. Culliford's to windward of us. The *Ruthless* is French built and the handiest craft afloat, —— her eyes! Before we can luff, she'll veer and give us another broadside through the cabin windows."

Through the cabin windows! Rose! Should he run to warn her?

"Lie down!" roared Captain Lockwood from the break of the poop. "Flat on deck, all hands!"

Fairly blown off his feet by the force of the command, Stephen fell on his face amid a huddle of other men. Looking sidewise and up, he saw the Captain still standing erect, heedless of his own danger.

Like a tropical thunder-clap, with long-resounding echoes, came the crash of an irregular broadside. Stephen's heart stopped dead at the fearful sound and the whistling scream of a myriad unseen missiles flying past overhead. Round blue patches of sky appeared suddenly through the topsails. Spars were splintered, halliards and braces cut away, and a great wooden block fell smash! on the deck within an inch of a seaman's skull. The *Swiftsure* shivered and shook beneath the blows of the heavy round-shot. Long white splinters flew from her battered topsides.

"Stand by!" shouted Lockwood through his cupped hands. "Fire!"

He gave the command just as the *Swiftsure's* starboard rail sank down on the weather-roll; the side of the *Ruthless*, rising high above them, was a target hard to miss. Charged with a round-shot and a bag of bullets apiece, the ten bronze nine-pounders smashed great gaps through the pirate's bulwarks and the men that thronged behind them.

With no recollection of how he had come there, Stephen found himself among a crowd of other runner-boys at the magazine door. Snatching the two full passing-boxes thrust out to him through the holes in the thick screen of water-soaked felt that guarded the door from flying sparks, he ran up on deck. As he sped back to his gun, he had a glimpse of the enemy's graceful top-hamper and the sinister black flag flying at her peak, before the rising cloud of powder-smoke hid them from his eyes.

He heard a rattle of orders from the captain and the creaking of the yards. They were coming about. Would the *Ruthless* rake them as the pessimist foretold? Stephen had a fearful vision of Rose with great cannon balls crashing round her, and had to get what comfort he could from the thought that she would know what to do to keep herself from harm better than he could tell her. Besides, she would surely have orders from her father. Glad he was to think she was not locked in her berth. And all the time his subconscious mind, trained by long hours of drill, carried him to the gun, where the flannel-wrapped powder charges were instantly snatched from him and rammed home.

"With solid-shot, load!" boomed Captain Lockwood's voice from the poop. "Let the guns be double-shotted! Run out! Forward division, train sharp aft! At the same elevation, all! Lively, my lads, we've got them now!"

Cold thrills ran up and down Stephen's spine.

A ragged hole, made by one of the enemy's twelve-pounders, yawned in the six-foot bulwark close to where Stephen stood. Sticking his head out, fearfully and quickly in with it again, he yet had time to see the word "Ruthless" in blood-red letters across an ornately carved and gilded stern. Beneath the legend, two light stern-chasers barked impotently from lower-deck ports. Sweeping his glance upward as he withdrew his head, he beheld on the poop above, the long tiller wagging idly to and fro, and saw a pirate run towards the helm, only to fall prone on the quarter-deck, before he reached it. Bravo! The pirates were caught as he had feared they would catch the *Swiftsure*. He did not know that the *Swiftsure's* pivot-gun, laid and fired by the sure hand of Panama Williams as the two ships drew abreast, had raked the pirate's poop with a storm of small-shot, killing or wounding every man on the quarter-deck.

As fast as other pirates could lay aft to take the helm, they were picked off by Nimble Dick. The sharp-shooting little sergeant of fusileers was up in the *Swiftsure's* maintop, with six topmen busily loading and priming muskets for him to fire with deadly aim. By this ingenious scheme, the one expert marksman among them lost no time and wasted few shots.

Deprived of her helmsman, the *Ruthless* fell off to leeward, till she had not a gun to bear, while the *Swiftsure* luffed up smartly and came about on the port tack. Within easy pistol-shot she crossed her adversary's waist.

"Let them have it!" shouted John Lockwood.

The ten broadside guns and the pivot hurled twenty-two heavy cannon-balls at a low velocity, which had a fearful shattering effect at such short range. From the poop-lantern to the quarter-gallery, the pirate's elaborately beautiful stern-works were smashed and beaten in.

A shout of triumph went up from the *Swiftsure's* crew. Instead of being raked, they had raked their foe and deprived him of the weather-gage. Confidence in themselves and in their captain was twin-born with that cheer.

"Powder, half-charge! With grape-shot, double-charge!" rang Lockwood's voice through the din.

Stephen and the other powder-monkeys raced to obey. Such a command could mean but one thing: they were coming to close quarters.

The smoke was too thick now for Nimble Dick to score a bull's-eye with every shot. A plucky pirate reached the helm of the *Ruthless* and brought her up into the wind. But as she luffed the *Swiftsure* wore and ran up alongside.

GUN after gun barked from the rover's port battery at the black hull gliding past and ever nearer. Gun after gun, its muzzle still raised for long-range work, its priming hastily touched off by the linstock or pistol-flash of the first pirate rushing over from the other side, sent its round-shot hurtling high through the *Swiftsure's* rigging, or bit a segment out of her starboard rail.

"Depress your pieces!" Lockwood exhorted his gunners. "Drive in those quoins! Drive 'em in! Now, through the first gun-port you come abreast of, fire at will!"

From stem to stern ran the rippling, echoing thunder of the long nine-pounders. Hard on the roar of the last discharge, while all was still hidden in a choking smother of smoke, a grinding shock ran through both ships as their hulls came in contact.

"Heave grapnels! Boarders away! Lash her rigging to ours! Out cutlasses! Stand by to board! Board! Board! Board!"

Rushing to the rail amidst a crowd of yelling gunners, Stephen grasped the top of the six-foot bulwark and started to pull himself up. At the same moment some eager seaman gave him so strong and impatient a boost from behind that he was nearly pitched overboard headforemost. Though the two vessels were chafing each other's paint at the waterline, the "tumble-home" of their topsides left a perilous gulf between rail and rail. Whoever fell overboard between them would be ground to a red pulp in short order.

A pirate's pistol flashed in Stephen's face as he sprawled there, balancing on his stomach, heels dangling inboard, arms waving wildly overside. The bullet whistled above his prone body as his face lowered in his see-saw motion, and found its mark in the throat of the man pushing up behind him. Unaware of this, and fearing another too-hearty shove from the fellow behind, Stephen, with a mighty effort, managed to draw himself together, still swaying, crouched and jumped.

Fortunately for Stephen the *Ruthless* tilted slightly toward the *Swiftsure*, as if with intent to catch him, as he sprang. Even so, his heels skidded on the enemy's rail as he plumped down onto her deck. His first sensation was one of disgust as his body slid on the filthy, greasy planks, after the holystoned cleanliness of the *Swiftsure*. It made him realize that piracy was a dirty trade in more ways than one.

He scrambled to his feet and drew his sword, even as the man who had fired at him threw away the empty pistol and whipped out his cutlass. Their blades clashed for a few seconds only; then the onrush of the throng of the *Swiftsure's* men swept the two apart and away from the rail. Stephen had been the first of the boarders to reach the pirate's deck.

A tremendous voice, reeking with the foulest oaths, was roaring out:

"Drive 'em back! Cut 'em down!"

Through the powder-fog loomed a huge

and terrible figure. Stripped to the waist, his brawny body was blue with tattooing wherever it was not tawny with matted hair. His face was contorted with hate, his eyes glared like those of a Samurai warrior in a Japanese battle picture. A green silk scarf was bound around his head of flaming red hair; another, girded about his waist, was stuck full of pistols which the giant drew and fired with his left hand, while with his right he wielded an enormous cutlass.

"Culliford! Red Culliford!" shouted the pirates, who now rallied and charged in the wake of their famous leader. They had suffered sorely from the three broadsides, and were thirsty for revenge. Never yet had they failed to cut to pieces the foes whom they met hand to hand.

But never had Red Culliford's rovers met such a crew as this. Lockwood's turtlers and fishermen, drilled and led by himself and Panama Williams, fought like naval veterans. McDougal's Scots felt that they were there to teach the English the use of cold steel. Most of the Highlanders among them had saved the price of a cutlass by bringing the ancestral claymore; some even carried the round bull's-hide shield, a strange thing to see on a sailor's arm. Fiercest of all were the men from the *William and Mary*—escaped slaves leaping at the throats of their cruel task-masters.

Back and forth surged the savage, swirling fight on the deck of the *Ruthless*, already cumbered with dismounted guns and mangled bodies struck down when the *Swiftsure's* second broadside burst through the forward bulkhead of the cabin and raked the waist. The pirates were still equal in number to their foes and met them valiantly, and like desperate men.

The great guns were silent now, but the crack of the pistols, the clang of cutlass and claymore, oaths, shrieks and the rival battle-cries of "Lockwood!" and "Culliford!" made a tremendous din. Deep through the tumult rolled the slogans of five different Highland clans, and the lion-like roars of David and Jonathan. No longer slaves, but freemen who had voluntarily followed their old master on his quest for the honor of which he had been foully robbed, the two big blacks ranged terribly among his foes. Exulting in their strength, they had given their cutlasses to two seamen from the *William and Mary*, and now they were flailing about them with capstan bars.

Stephen saw but little of the fight at large and had no time to speculate as to its outcome. He was too busy trying to keep his own head from being split open or hewn off his shoulders by the swashing blows of one of Red Culliford's men, who had taken him on for combat.

Tall, powefully built, and apparently tireless, the pirate plied his cutlass so furiously and well that Stephen was kept constantly on the defensive. He dared not take the time to attempt a single thrust. Every instant, every atom of energy, was needed to parry the endless rain of mighty blows that again and again all but beat down his guard.

Keeping his eyes fixed on those of his opponent, as his fencing master had taught him, Stephen became aware of a narrow red scar that ran up and down the man's face, marking his forehead, cheek and chin, barely missing the left eye, and splitting both lips and the left nostril. Stephen felt he had seen the fellow before, fighting as he was fighting now.

Stephen had seen but one other fight—and it now came back to him as vividly as when he had watched it from the sedan chair. The same cutlass, the same bully, being opposed by the same small-sword, now in his own hands. Again he saw Rose parrying for her life, as he was doing; again he saw her opponent's face scored with the point of this very small-sword. No such luck came to Stephen as he strove against the new-fledged pirate, Malachi Forbes!

How came Malachi Forbes here, on the deck of the *Ruthless?* He had escaped from St. Luke's the day before the *Swiftsure* sailed, and the *Ruthless* was then at Mangrove Key. The *Lively Lass!* Stephen suddenly recalled the words of Mr. Bass, the *William and Mary's* boatswain: "Sloop *Lively Lass* of St. Luke's brought the pirates word of a slow, rich merchantman in the Bahama Channel." That would be the *Virgin Queen!* There she lay to leeward—slow, rich, and disabled by the pirates. Peter Burgess's ship—sailing delayed because her passengers wanted to see the hanging. Burgess and his crony, Thomas Courant, going in her to London to cry up Price. Malachi Forbes—one of Mr. Price's spies, traitor to every master; he would know about the *Virgin Queen.* It did not occur to Stephen, as it had to Thomas Courant, that the traitor might be the Chief Justice of St. Luke's.

ALL this flashed through Stephen's mind in the smallest second of time. But the brief lapse of closest attention lost him his touch with Malachi's blade. Deceived by a cunning feint, he parried wildly and left a wide opening. Down flashed the cutlass—only to meet and glance off the forte of another small-sword, thrust out in the nick of time.

"Stand aside," ordered the voice of Captain Lockwood, thrusting the exhausted youth out of the way. "I've a score to settle with Malachi Forbes."

"Don't kill him—save—testimony!" gasped the panting Stephen.

John Lockwood lunged and thrust, parrying Malachi's strokes with ease, touching him here and there, till the pirate was bleeding from a dozen flesh-wounds, as his opponent drove him at will about the deck.

Looking round about him Stephen saw that the fight was practically over. Only from one other place, forward by the break of the forecastle, still came the clash of steel. There Red Culliford was engaged with a ring of St. Luke's men.

Suddenly the sword-clashing ceased. Through the ring burst Red Culliford, his huge bare chest rising and falling like the side of a blacksmith's bellows, his cheek slashed open and the blade of his cutlass snapped off at the hilt. Behind him bounded Panama Williams. Old as was the ex-buccaneer he had put to flight the hulking, swaggering chief of pirates.

Culliford whirled in his tracks and threw the heavy brass hilt of the broken cutlass straight at his pursuer's face. Panama dodged in time to escape the missle, but slipped in a pool of blood and fell flat on the deck. Culliford drew the last pistol from his sash, cocked it, and stood glaring round him.

Save for the hard-pressed Malachi Forbes, all his men were either dead or crying for quarter. The battle was lost and the *Ruthless* a prize of the captain of the *Swiftsure*. From every direction Lockwood's men came rushing amidships to make an end of Red Culliford.

Resistance was useless. Capture meant hanging at Gallows Point, if not from his own yard-arm. The pirate captain knew a better way.

"Come with me to ——!" he bellowed, and jumped down into the open hatchway near where he had stood.

By the spilt powder-grains blackening the deck around that hatch, Stephen knew that it led to the magazine. Red Culliford was going to blow up the ship!

The *Swiftsure* and the *Ruthless* were lashed side by side—both would be blown to pieces.

Before Culliford's head had disappeared below the hatch-combing, Stephen's feet had left the deck in a convulsive leap that carried him to the edge of the hatchway and over. Straight down he fell, landing in a heap on the lower deck, his shoulders grinding against the bottom rungs of the ladder, and his eyes fixed on a narrow white-washed runway, an open, unscreened door, and the magazine beyond—all dimly lit by the candles burning behind their thick bull's-eyes. Outlined against the dull glow was the black bulk of Red Culliford.

The pirate had just risen to his feet after his jump and was starting down the runway when he heard the thump of Stephen's arrival. Whirling about, Culliford instinctively leveled his pistol at Stephen and all but pulled the trigger before he remembered his better use for his last shot. Swiftly he turned his back and ran as fast as he could toward the far end of the runway.

Stephen was on his feet and in pursuit; but the distance was too short for him to hope to overcome the other's lead. Culliford darted through the open doorway of the magazine with its powder barrels stacked all about. The light from the bull's-eye glinted on the polished black grains near the top of the last-opened barrel.

Red Culliford lowered his pistol hand toward the open barrel. Stephen had caught up to within thrusting distance, he hoped, and lunged with all his strength and all his weight. The small-sword entered the pirate's left arm-pit and came out through his neck. Stephen felt the hilt strike solid flesh; then it was wrested from his hand by the pirate's fall.

But Red Culliford's dying fingers clinched and pulled the trigger. A flash, a roar, and the awful thought that he had failed, were the last things that Stephen knew.

CHAPTER V

HEAVEN

A PERSISTENT creaking and groaning, growing gradually louder and familiar, wedged its way into Stephen's consciousness. He was not aware of opening his

eyes, but of the presence of something intolerably bright that shifted and gleamed before them. Presently he recognized it as a spot of sunshine on the bulkhead at the foot of his bunk. The sounds were the workings of the cabin timbers. He was in his berth and the *Swiftsure* was under way.

Had he just wakened from a nightmare? What time was it? Stephen turned his head on the pillow toward where his watch hung ticking on a nail by the door.

A stab of pain arrested the movement. Without knowing it, he groaned. Sunshine and wall melted and swam together before his eyes. When the pain lessened and his vision cleared again, he saw Rose looking down at him.

He tried to speak, but when he opened his lips she placed her finger upon them before he could form a sound. She shook her head, breathing softly, "You mustn't talk." He attempted to move again—again the pain. Closing his eyes, he fell backward into a black and bottomless abyss.

It was pain that roused him again, to find the sunlight gone and the berth lit by the weak rays and filled with the strong smell of a swinging slush lamp. Hands were busy about his head, which he now realized was swathed in bandages. Bending over him and adjusting a fresh cloth with tender care stood Captain Lockwood.

"Healing nicely," he whispered to some one near, as he threw a wad of blood-clotted linen out through the open dead-light. "Fever going down fast. He'll be up and about tomorrow."

Stephen opened his eyes. "Where's Rose?" he asked.

Captain Lockwood laughed, softly, and replied:

"Asleep, by my orders. She's worked herself to exhaustion. Eighteen wounded besides yourself. We lost eleven men killed."

"Mr. Williams?" Stephen asked.

"Fit as a bird. He's acting skipper of the prize. What with making repairs and guarding prisoners there's work enough for all."

"When can I get up and do my share?"

"You've done your share already, Mr. Pringle—and more, sir. Had you been the splinter of an instant slower with your wits or your sword, Red Culliford would have lived to flash his pistol into that open powder-barrel. He must have flinched when he felt your point, and twisted about, firing as he fell. His shoulders being on deck, or near it by the time the flintlock snapped and the priming lit the charge, the shot flew high, and by the grace of God did no more than furrow your temple: Now," finished the captain, "drink this and lie still." He held to Stephen's lips a tumblerful of awful-tasting stuff Mr. McDougal had concocted and held in readiness. It seemed compounded of everything in the medicine chest. Stephen closed his eyes and tried to forget it. He was soon asleep.

When he woke again, he was drenched with sweat and free from fever. His head was clear and no longer ached so intolerably. But he had a raging thirst, made worse by the bitter after-taste of the medicine. Also the berth was unbearably hot and stuffy. Stephen decided he could not breathe freely till he got on deck where the air was good.

Presently, rubbed dry and wearing a clean shirt and his pair of canvas breeches, returned by Rose at some time while he lay unconscious, he staggered on wobbly legs out of the berth, supporting himself with a hand along the paneled wall. He reached the cabin door. Bracing himself against the jamb, he stood there, drinking deep of the clean, fresh sea-air. A waning moon hung low in the sky. By its soft light Stephen made out the *Ruthless*, a mile to starboard, keeping company with the *Swiftsure*. Both ships were running free and the watch were having an easy time.

So slight was the motion of the vessel that Stephen managed to keep his feet and work his way along the bulkhead to the starboard rail. Thence he journeyed forward by easy stages, from the breach of one nine-pounder to the next, sitting down to rest on a gun-carriage whenever he needed to, till at last he came abreast of the scuttle-butt. A minute later he was draining the coconut-shell cup that hung beside the cask. When he had quenched his thirst, he felt so much better that he adventured on an unsupported journey aft.

Halfway to his goal, his knees began suddenly to shake and threaten to give way beneath him. As he stood there, unsteadily he saw Rose come out of the cabin door and stare anxiously about. Her hair hung in a tumble of curls over her shoulders and a dark sea-cloak covered her gown.

"Stephen!" she called. "Where are you?"

Instantly the strength flooded back into

his body; but when he tried to answer her call, he found his voice too weak.

Then she spied him and came running to him and threw a supporting arm round his shoulders.

"Oh!" she exclaimed; "when I found you gone from your berth, I knew not what to think. I feared you might have thrown yourself overboard in delirium. Stephen! Stephen! Let me go! Stephen!"

"Rose! Rose!" he said ardently, and this was all his delirium. He kissed her on the lips, as he had done once before.

This time she could have prevented it—but she did not.

CHAPTER VI

SETTLING THE LOCKWOOD ACCOUNT

LOUD clanged the bells of the cathedral and of the seven lesser churches of St. Luke's Town. Deep rolled the drums in the market-place, sounding the call to arms.

A pirate fleet had entered the harbor! Red Culliford was there, with Blackbeard, Ben Hornygold, and half a score more of pirate captains. And John Lockwood was there, in command, returned to revenge himself on the Town of St. Luke's. Unless a great ransom were paid, they would lay the place in ruins. Bury your silver and send your womenfolk into the country, neighbor, as fast as the Lord will let you!

Acting Governor Price had ordered the Town Guard and all other brave and loyal men under arms. Colonel Taylor and his fusileers had come from the fort to help defend the city. They were throwing up a redoubt and mounting, at the head of Galleon Beach, all the old ship's guns they could find. Thither ran everybody who was not already running in the opposite direction, or was too busy robbing other people's deserted houses to run anywhere.

When they came within view of the harbor, some felt cheated and disappointed that the great pirate fleet consisted of but two ships: the *Ruthless* and the *Swiftsure*. From the latter a boat put off and approached the shore.

"See! See!" called out a keen-eyed citizen," 'tis Lockwood himself sitting in the stern-sheets!"

Down to Galleon Beach sped a great black horse with a white-faced rider. It was Mr. Simon Price, the acting governor, on his famous blooded stallion, the swiftest steed ever brought to St. Luke's Island. In a shower of flying sand, he reined in before the Fourth Fusileers and the Town Guard, drawn up in line near the water's edge.

"Fire on that boat as soon as it comes within range!" commanded Price.

Colonel Wingate Taylor declined. "They are flying the white flag, Mr. Price," he pointed out.

A slender seaman was standing in the bows of the approaching long-boat, vigorously waving a square of sun-bleached sailcloth at the end of a sponge-staff.

"What if they are?" demanded Price. "They are pirates—outlaws—murderers! We hold no parley with such. 'Tis but a trick to enable them to land."

"Let them land, and welcome," replied the veteran. "We can meet every man they send ashore and beat them handsomely, if they are fools enough to try. But if they stay aboard and ply their guns, they they can batter the town to pieces. And that they will, if we violate the rules of war by firing on a flag of truce."

"You cursed parade-ground pedant!" raved Price. "You would betray us all and have the island laid waste, with your wretched punctilio! Captain Tompkins, I command you! Let the Town Guard fire on that boat!"

The plump little militia officer owned much property in the town and was there to defend it against invaders. But he saw no sense in inciting the pirates to fire revengeful broadsides of solid-shot through his red-tiled roofs. Moreover, he was a great admirer of Colonel Taylor and strove to pattern himself after him in all things military.

"'Twould be contrary to all the laws and articles of war, your Excellency," he deprecated. "Why should we not harken to what John Lockwood may have to say? There are but a scant dozen with him in the boat."

Glaring in helpless fury at the two officers, the acting governor wheeled his horse and addressed the armed and undisciplined citizens who had come to help defend the beach.

"Are you cowards who fear to defend your homes?" he shouted.

"No!" they roared.

"Are you true Englishmen and loyal subjects, who will obey the orders of his Majesty's representative?"

"Yes!"

"Then, in the King's name, I command you—"

"Stop!" rang out a voice that was heard and recognized by every man on Galleon Beach. "Who the —— are you, Mr. Simpon Price, to be giving orders in the King's name?"

Down the sandy slope, riding a plunging dapple-gray gelding and wearing jack-boots and a flapping red dressing-gown, came the unwontedly pale but unmistakable Sir Bellamy Pringle.

"What the plague d'ye mean, with all this ringing and drumming and running about?" he demanded of the world at large. "'Twould rouse a man from his grave, let alone a sick-bed that he's sick of lying on! Where are all my rascals of servants and house-slaves? And what the murrain are you all doing here, with your pikes and musketoons? Are the Spaniards upon us, or are we at war with the French again?"

"It is John Lockwood," answered Price, before any one else could speak. "He fled the island and returned to his piracy the night after you fell ill, Sir Bellamy."

"What? Has John Lockwood broken his word? Then, by Heaven! I'll hang him as high as Haman, and every scoundrel in his crew with him!"

Riding down to the water's edge and rising in his stirrups, Sir Bellamy glowered at the long-boat, which was now close inshore.

"Father!" called a glad, strong young voice.

"Stephen! Where the plague are you, lad?" He looked all about along the beach, even up at the sky.

"Here! Look out to the boat!" The sunburned seaman with the white flag waved it in all directions with one hand, while with the other he plucked off the knotted kerchief from his bandaged head.

Had not Dr. Rives tapped the Governor's veins so well, Sir Bellamy would have dropped dead then and there, with another and a final stroke of apoplexy.

"Stephen!" he gasped. "My son! Have you turned pirate?"

"Sir Bellamy," said John Lockwood, rising in the stern-sheets; "let me answer for your son, and for myself."

"Beware!" called Price from halfway up the beach. "Come back, your Excellency, out of pistol-range!"

"Be silent, sir!" replied the Governor, angry at the interruption.

"Let him speak!" rang the deep-chested, far-carrying tones of Captain Lockwood. "Let the Chief Justice speak—when he has heard the testimony of my witnesses, the crew of the *William and Mary*, and my prisoner, Malachi Forbes. Let him speak, and explain the evidence I found in Red Culliford's cabin on board the *Ruthless*. Let him—and let you, Sir Bellamy,—and let all within hearing listen, while I now read aloud his death-bed statement of Mr. Thomas Courant, taken down and witnessed by the Captain and officers of the *Virgin Queen* —"

"Stop him!" came a sudden shout from Stephen, who pointed excitedly up the beach. "Stop him before he gets away!"

Simon Price had heard enough. He had maintained his position till the last possible moment, the more steadily because, immediately following the departure of John Lockwood, he had perfected all preparations for his own flight from the island, pending such an issue as confronted him now. He was mounted on the fastest horse on the island, and the road was clear before him to a certain cove, where a speedy sloop and a trusty crew lay waiting, night and day. Wheeling his mount, he drove in the spurs and sped up the beach toward the opening of the nearest street.

Pursuit would have been futile. But there was one behind him who was quick of wit and steady of aim. Snatching a musket from the nearest fusileer, Colonel Wingate Taylor fired from the saddle. Price's splendid black stallion reared and toppled over, a bullet through his heart.

The fugitive sprang clear and came down on the soft, deep sand. Cumbered with riding boots and advanced in years, it would have availed him nothing to have tried to run, nor did he make the attempt. Cocking the pistol he had drawn from the saddle-holster, Simon Price turned to face his foes.

The secret partner of pirates and buccaneers was revealed. His thin white face contorted with hate and rage, he seemed, as he crouched there, pistol in hand on Galleon Beach, the incarnation of all that was evil in St. Luke's half-forgotten past.

For a moment those running forward to capture him had this vision. Then it vanished in a white cloud of powder-smoke, as his self-slain body crumpled to the sand.

DOCTOR SAM McCHESNEY

Author of "The Gila Kid," "Power," etc.

WHEN a tired traveler engages a room and bed in a questionable desert crossroads station, he expects to ignore the minor irritations thereof. But when the floorboards jerk because of tremendous concussions from below stairs, he is apt to be exasperated.

Red-headed Doctor Sam McChesney, who had buried his long, homely face under coverlets to stifle the brawling of drunken voices from the saloon-store beneath him, jumped straight upward as a thunderous blast sent lead through his room. He lifted himself on quivering arms and stared downward to the lines of light which marked the chinks between the thin floorplanks. A jagged hole showed yellow.

"Hey!" he shouted, edging toward the wall.

Bang!

This slug was closer, ripping out a long section of pine board.

"I'm a wild-eyed shootin' fool!" bawled a thick bass voice. "Yow! I'm a lion on wheels!"

McChesney leaped out of bed, yanked his clothes off a chair, huddled against the door and drew some of the raiment over his gaunt frame. The bass voice bawled again. Flame spurted through the floorboards, concussions blew smoke into the dark bed-room. Some one pleaded from below.

"Quit it! There's a man sleepin' up there!"

"Aw, what do I care?" bellowed the bass. "Let'm dance!" He fired upward again. "Let'm get out of the way! Yip! I'm a shootin' fool!"

The goaded McChesney yanked his suspenders over his square shoulders, reached for his traveling bag and grabbed the butt of a heavy six-shooter.

"That's enough!" he roared. "If you can't hold your liquor, go home and sleep it off!"

There was silence. Then the truculent bass:

"We got a smart aleck upstairs, eh? I'm gonna root him out!"

"No!" yelped some one.

Two shots ripped through McChesney's room.

"Get fresh with me, will you?" raged the bass, with the querulous insistence of a drunken man. "Come down! You, up there. Come down and meet a man!"

"Oh, stop it!" pleaded McChesney, ashamed of his own quick anger. "Let me alone! Go and do your shooting somewhere else!"

"Yow! We got a maneater upstairs! Watch me get'm!"

McChesney found his irritation rising again. He knew he was no gun fighter; merely a young graduate medico proud of

his crisp new diploma. But certain traits of his frontier parents and frontier childhood came to the fore as if the years in a city university had never been lived. He clicked the hammer of his pistol backward.

"Come down!" bellowed the bass.

"Not unless I have to," retorted McChesney.

"You'll not, eh?"

Heavy boots thumped on the floor below.

"Stop it!" implored McChesney. "Get away!"

The alarm in his voice gave the other courage.

"Get away? Wow! Lissen to that! Watch me turn'm inside out!"

"Aw, let him alone!" appealed a shrill voice.

The door below creaked as it opened wide. Boots stamped into the rear hallway.

"Come on out, you sneakin' swine! Lemme see you!"

McChesney, a lonely, lanky figure in a dark room where little shafts of light glared roundly from the floor, took a long breath and then, hating this business, he opened his door, stepped across a gloomy five-foot landing and peered down into the lamplighted hall below the winding staircase.

A black-bearded giant in cowhide boots, overalls and checked shirt glared upward through red-rimmed eyes. His thick lips were parted but snapped tight as his gaze focused past the shadowed banisters. For a split fraction of a second they looked at each other in the dim hallway, a blowsy drunken giant turned sober for the moment and a gangling young man with touseled red hair and a bony face set in grim lines. Each was holding a pistol, each was vigilant, each was waiting for the other to speak or move. McChesney mutely prayed for common sense.

Suddenly the giant's eyes flickered, telegraphing his intentions with cruel distinctness. His arm began to twitch. But in that flash of time McChesney's right hand tensed. His wrist swung the pistol barrel from his hip.

The wall echoed a thunderblast.

His finger pulled trigger again. The explosion drove straight into the blurred black face below him.

Through the smoke leaped a counter-explosion, burning McChesney's red cheek with powder, deafening his left ear.

His hand tightened on the trigger, but relaxed.

Through the haze, in the rocking light from the hall-lamp, he saw the heavy figure spin around, walk backward to the doorway, drop its arms, lean against the door-jamb, and then collapse slowly forward until the shoulders met the floor and the head lowered The figure seemed to hug the boards.

THE smoke evaporated. McChesney lowered his arm. There was silence below stairs.

Slowly, like an old man, McChesney swayed to the stairway, his heart pounding fiercely, his body hot, his mouth dry, his hands trembling. He bent toward the banister and steadied himself, walking down the creaky steps, halting in the doorway.

His nostrils caught the odors of stale beer, stale tobacco, dried fish and straw within the stuffy place where the heat of a stove intensified its disillusion. His mortified, blue eyes observed four scrawny scared loafers, a wet counter, a stack of apple boxes, many barrels, an open carton of dried prunes, and a jumble of advertisements of all shapes and manners. A fresh, pink-jawed blond, full-sized, gave him her pasteboard smile from the counter as she held a patented beverage to her perfect lips.

He felt the stare of five pairs of human eyes as he bent over the prone figure. He reached under the shirt, held his left hand there for a long time, and then arose slowly, wiping the hand on his trouser leg.

"Well, there's nothing I can do about it," he mumbled.

One of the loafers lifted an arm toward the farther wall.

"Nothin' to do but collect, mister. The money's yours. Go and git it!"

McChesney looked first at him and then at the plank wall with its fly-specked signs. Staring at him was a picture of the man he had slain. Beneath that was heavy type:

$2000 REWARD, DEAD OR ALIVE

Wanted for train robbery, Tom Martin, *alias* Young, *alias* Bridger. Notify Sheriff at Metropolis, California.

McChesney read all the details, stuffing into his hip pocket the six-shooter which had rested in his hand.

"It's tough to take money for that!" he

managed to remark, feeling stage-struck, like an actor wishing he were off the boards. "Funny, this business. I wish he'd let me alone."

A mustached fellow spoke:

"You better drift along, stranger. See that clock over the bar? Midnight. Tom's friends was comin' to meet him here at midnight."

McChesney's red head nodded tiredly.

"So be it, then. I'll leave." He started for the hallway without looking at the prone figure. "Any place to rest along the road?"

"Nope. Not till you git to Metropolis. It's only fifteen mile."

McChesney cocked his head. Outside the store he heard the clattering of hoofs and the jingling of spurs. Beyond the dirty glass of the front door, the distorted figure of a rider on a dancing horse came toward the light. McChesney decided to have no more scenes. He ran upstairs, grabbed his valise and his precious microscope box, yanked his coat on and slipped out of his empty room just as the trampling of many feet resounded in the store downstairs.

There was a sharp yell, a medley of profanity and a loud roar.

"Who done this?" demanded a masterful voice.

"A fella upstairs," explained a store loafer

McChesney hesitated on the landing but decided not to go into the light of the hallway downstairs. He slipped to his room, shut the door gently and started on tiptoe across the splintered floor, praying that the boards would not creak. He heard the dominant voice below—

"All right, we'll go up and git him!"

The resentful McChesney reached his open window, hauled his long body over the sill and laid his feet upon the slanting porch roof outside the store, noting that the night was chilly. His breath brought vapor.

Boots pounded on the stairway behind his door.

Swiftly, trying to be unerring in his footsteps, McChesney crawled to the left along the wall of the house, hampered by the valise and the instrument case. He reached another window. This was closed. He approached the tin drain at the edge of the roof, just as the door of his room crashed open. Voices below. He tossed his valise overboard and, tucking his microscope box in the crook of his arm, swung himself over the swaying edge.

The whole section of roof gave way.

Yells came from the window. Excited shots sent yellow flashes over the porch. Boots clattered in the lighted store. McChesney's knees collapsed as he hit the ground. Shingles, tin and old glass rained upon him. Three horses at a near-by hitching-rack reared back on their haunches.

THE store door opened. A man ran out just as McChesney arose, collected his bag, hugged his instrument, and rushed for the nearest horse, a big gray. The man at the porch unsheathed a pistol. McChesney heard it, whirled about, dropped his valise, yanked out his own six-shooter, recovered the valise and stood on guard.

The man in the light of the front door stood irresolute and then fired for luck.

The gray horse jumped, squealing with pain. The cry, it was shockingly human, made McChesney grit his teeth and fire three wild shots at the porch. The other fellow jumped inside, slamming the door and breaking the glass.

"I guess that'll hold 'em!" raged McChesney.

He reached the hackamore of the second horse, untied it, glanced with pity at the rolling gray and managed to reach his chosen mount undisturbed, knowing that the line of the porch roof prevented the men at the window from hitting him.

"We'll see you again, mister!" promised a voice.

"Not if I can help it!" retorted McChesney, nudging his animal close to the building and around the corner.

A flash of flame leaped from a side window, but it only urged McChesney's horse faster. Then the man who had paid for a lodging for the night headed into the open prairie, underneath cold stars.

At dawn the sleepy rider plodded past the green irrigated fields approaching Metropolis, in a high plateau between the mountains and the desert. Shortly after sunrise he was in the office of the county jail, talking with the sheriff, whose keen, shrewd eyes seemed to look into the medico's very insides.

The sheriff was beardless, lantern-jawed and somewhat callow, but his face was full of native shrewdness and his eyes had the glint of cold steel. McChesney was seated under a long glass case full of trophies of past crimes. A glance convinced him that,

so far as crime was concerned, the county was bounteously equipped.

"So you killed Tom Martin!" mused the sheriff. "H'm. Scared?"

"Scared? What of? It's over and done!"

"Over? It ain't begun yet! The Martins, Tom and Bill, are leaders of a gang of no-goods. They prowl around the hills. I've never been able to catch 'em. There's a reward out against 'em for robbin' a safe on a Sante Fe train. They've sworn they'll git anybody who tries for that reward!"

"I did not come to fight," said McChesney, with blue eyes frowning toward the window. "I came to practise medicine."

The sheriff said nothing.

"The odds are too great!" argued McChesney.

The sheriff watched him.

"A man would be a fool to stay here among the dangers he can not estimate!" blurted McChesney.

The sheriff watched him. The young medico jumped up.

"I'm a free-born American citizen! A man has a right to make a living wherever he sees fit! I came here for an honest purpose and I'm going to stay! If these people think they can scare me out or drive me out, they have another think coming!"

"That's what I was waitin' to hear you say!" approved the sheriff. "I thought you was like that. A softy couldn't live here. Any relatives?"

McChesney gasped, but his reply was matter-of-fact.

"No. I just graduated. Worked through college. On my own. I heard there was an opening here, so I borrowed the money and came."

"All right. You're safe in town, mebbe. When you go into the hills, look out for traps. Otherwise, go about your business. About this reward for Tom Martin, now. I'll investigate and report. You'll get your warrant from the county treasurer. You need the money, mebbe."

"I do," admitted McChesney. "I want to buy some instruments."

McChesney slept thereafter. Late in the afternoon he leased a white-painted, two-room shanty facing upon the board walk in the center of town. The rear room was his residence, with furniture bought on credit from the general store across the street. The front room became his office. The microscope gleamed with copper grandeur above a stack of absorbent cotton. Over the front door McChesney nailed his sign.

Boots tramped past all afternoon. Shreds of town gossip bawled by loungers informed McChesney that the length of his stay was a sporting matter, subject to bets. One jolly gambler gave him two days. McChesney slept that night with his gun and holster slung alongside the bed.

Boots thumped in his front room early next morning. He opened his bedroom door and faced a burly, mustached fellow whose front teeth were partly missing. The man was blowsy, blear-eyed and truculent, as if he had slept off a recent debauch but still was drunk enough to want trouble. He planted his feet apart.

"So you've got the nerve to hang out your shingle right on the main street, eh? Ain't you the fella who shot Tom Martin?"

McChesney made the mistake of taking the defensive. He nodded courteously and tried to wave the man toward a chair.

"The matter was forced upon me," he responded, in a mild voice. "I shouldn't suffer for that."

"No, and you ain't goin' to make money out of it, either! Clever, ain't you? You killed him legal, didn't you? No chance to face a court, is there?"

"My only motive was self-defense."

"Self-defense, you that shot him in cold blood, aimin' to get the reward. Blood money. Judas money. You think you'll be paid?"

"Why, you're 'way off!" gasped McChesney, amazed at the attack. "I didn't want to fight him. I didn't shoot him in cold blood."

"You lie!"

Red fire touched McChesney's brain. His body became a chopping, smashing, slashing pinwheel which whirled the other out of the door, until he stepped backward off the board walk and landed on all fours, alongside a buggy with a shying horse. The medico dropped his arms.

"My temper again!" he groaned.

Up and down the street he saw men watching. The sheriff ambled across from the general store, gave the victim a glance and nodded to the medico.

"Fast work," grunted the sheriff. "Who started this?"

McChesney explained it. The beaten man retreated beyond the buggy, watched by the thoughtful eyes of the sheriff.

"But why did he accuse me of shooting the man in cold blood?" demanded the medico.

"That's deliberate," said the sheriff, whose personality, though rustic, seemed to keep the onlookers at a distance. "Crooks always justify themselves. It makes 'em martyrs. It's a regular business with this bunch. My gosh, man, think what I'm up against! Half the country, honest people at that, thinks they're heroes and I'm a devil, because they've learned to beat me into town with their side of the case!"

McCHESNEY had nothing to say. Here in this isolated little western town he was witnessing the workings of the thing later to be called propaganda. But while it disturbed him, he was not given vision to see how far-flung were its nets, which was perhaps a good thing. His sympathy was for the sheriff.

A man on horseback came around a corner and galloped down the main street, halting and dismounting in front of McChesney's office.

"Are you the new doctor?" hailed the rider. Then, "Old Man Cummins' little daughter's sick up in Long Valley. Looks like pneumonia!"

McChesney looked at the sheriff. The sheriff glanced up and went down the street, and then nodded with deliberate judgment.

"These here are honest folks. If Bill, here, says Callie's got pneumonia, then she's got it!"

"How far?" asked McChesney.

"Twenty-six mile."

"Well, there's nothing to do but go."

The sheriff turned his back to McChesney, stared at the once-gilded cupola of the old court house across the street and rasped over his shoulder—

"If you didn't go, you wouldn't amount to much!"

McChesney looked his resentment, but he let it go.

The doctor and his guide took a woodland road winding for hours into the hills above the town. Noon came and passed. They ascended to a bare granite country and took a shortcut trail with steep climbs and dizzy descents. Vast panoramas came into view. Once McChesney saw an eagle's nest below him, hanging over a valley where trees looked like little green blotches, but he arrived there two hours later and saw they were enormous firs towering above him.

The travelers went over a lower ridge, toiled up a long slope and down toward another valley where they rejoined the road alongside a meadow.

The guide pointed to a pine board cabin with six windows, peeping out of shadowed woods at his right. The windows were closed. The shades were down.

McChesney dismounted at the little porch. The door opened. A lanky old man with a scraggly beard emerged followed by a slim, black-haired girl in faded red calico, whose narrow but somewhat pretty face bore the danger signs of temper.

"Hurry!" croaked the old man, whose hands were trembling.

McChesney entered the cabin. His nostrils smelt warm pine boards and recent fried bacon. His eyes beheld a dark bedroom, partitioned away from the kitchen by a curtain of old blankets. At the farther end of the room was a cot, The flushed face of a child of about thirteen peeped from a valley in the pillow. Her eyes were closed. Her mouth was open, gasping for breath, but there was little vigor to it.

McChesney yanked his stethoscope out of his bag, and jammed its mouth against the frail breast. One heartbeat was enough to hear.

"Whisky!" he called.

The girl produced a bottle of white moonshine.

"Open those windows!"

She hesitated.

"Open!" he insisted.

She raised everything with a bang, then stood against the wall, eyeing him like a lynx. But McChesney's red head was close to the coverlets. His eyes showed disappointment.

At last he reached to his satchel and produced a hypodermic needle.

"Boiling water, please," he asked.

There was no movement.

Slowly he turned and noticed the gray-green eyes watching the tiny instrument of steel and glass in his hand. For the first time he really focused his attention upon her, observing that the guide had left.

"What is the matter?" he inquired.

She took a trembling breath, and blurted:

"You killed Tom Martin! They say you murder people. Folks shouldn't trust you. I'm goin' to watch you!"

The old man tried to intervene. He was shoved away.

"No! I'll say my say if I die for it! You come up here and open all the windows, bringin' in all that air, and then you fill her full of lightnin'—and now you want to jab that needle into her! No! No! I ain't goin' to let you! Pa, he's goin' to kill Callie! Old Doc Reed, him that died three years ago used to give 'em steam baths! Is this man givin' steam baths? No! He's jabbin' needles into her!"

McChesney recoiled at such virulent ignorance. In perplexity he looked over the slim young amazon, from the top of her waving hair to the toes of her large and muddy shoes. Then his hands fell to his sides and lines gathered about his big mouth.

"Would any one harm a little child?" he wondered, speaking to the knotty wall boards.

She hesitated, but—

"I notice you ain't givin' her any steam bath!"

His voice became soothing, not patronizing:

"There used to be a theory that vaporizing was good for the lungs, but that was stopped years ago. Here. I've a little medical book with me. Look under *pneumonia*. If you see anything wrong in my actions, tell me!"

She took the book, searching his eyes as if questioning whether to believe or doubt. He turned to his patient and stimulated the failing heart. Then with poultices and thermometer he fought the long fight, forgetting time, while his bony fingers worked with the exquisite tender touch which belongs alike to the sculptor, the musician and the born doctor.

Voices came to his consciousness. A man bawled behind him. A hand slapped his shoulder. The woman screamed—

"No! Let him alone!"

McChesney whirled around. He looked straight into the black muzzle of a pistol. The light from a lamp glinted into a stubbly visage with eyes too close together, behind the sights of the six-shooter. Another lamp shone from a distant bureau. The clock above it pointed to nine.

THE girl flung herself across the room and swung the pistol barrel from McChesney, who noted that her attitude had changed. The old man was gone.

"Don't you dare touch him while he's curin' Callie!" she raged. "You git out of here or you'll never call me your girl again!"

The man backed up, lowering his pistol, looking muddled.

"I was only aimin' to capture him," he explained, with pathetic irritation. "Think he's goin' to git any blood money for killin' Tom Martin? Huh!"

"Are you one of Martin's gang?" snapped McChesney.

"No, mister, but I'm one of the mountain people, see?"

The girl waved her fists, preparing to say something vehement to the man. McChesney's left hand, held lightly on the laboring little chest on the bed, noticed a faint change in the child's breathing. His right hand reached for the morphine. She was slipping through his hands, down into eternity!

The mountaineer clutched at the hypodermic.

"Look here, mister—"

McChesney knocked him across the room. The pistol clattered to the floor. The girl retrieved it and swung up its barrel.

"You!" gasped the mountaineer.

"I ain't turnin' against anybody!" she defended, in a voice that broke. "He's tryin' to cure Callie, that's all. If she dies—"

She did not finish the sentence.

"Oh, I'll watch around, then!"

The man, palpably the girl's beau who had happened in, retreated to the door. McChesney rolled up his sleeves and sat on the bed, resuming the silent battle. The clock ticked on.

The faint drumming of hoofs came from outside. McChesney did not notice it. Later an iron grip squeezed his shoulder. He looked around into a black-bearded face which was strangely reminiscent. The man spoke in a harsh bass voice like that of the far-away roadhouse—

"You didn't know Tom Martin had a brother, did you?"

McChesney struggled to his feet, weary and blear-eyed, disturbed, irritated, dangling his stethoscope in his right hand.

"What do I care?" he rasped. "You're in the way! What do you want?"

"Think you could kill Tom without accountin' to me? You've come into the wrong country, mister!"

McChesney spoke to the girl near the curtain.

"More mustard! Hot!"

The bearded man frowned. The girl soon

came forward with a steaming poultice on a griddle. She spat at him—

"You touch that man while Callie's sick and I'll kill you!"

The bearded man shoved her aside. The poultice was tossed smoking on the bed. McChesney grabbed it. Another man, the original narrow-eyed mountaineer, interposed between the girl and the bearded giant. The mountaineer's voice was snarling.

"Don't you git rough with her!"

"What? You talkin' to me?"

McChesney's little patient sighed. He tucked in the poultice and measured the pulse, watching every movement, not noticing the long silence behind him.

There was a sudden scuffle, a slap, a thudding of boots, a wrestling of arms, a concussion.

The room rocked. The lamps flared. The girl screamed. Feet clattered on the floor as men crowded to the door and windows, trying to get out of the line of fire. The mountaineer swayed, kneeled alongside the bed, grabbed the thin coverlets, and yanked them off the patient as he rolled to the floor.

"George, he's hurt you!" screamed the girl.

She threw herself upon him. The tormented McChesney drew himself upright, like a sailor buffeted by heavy waves, lurching badly. His voice broke at last—

"Verily, I never heard of a case like this!"

The bearded fellow strode forward, pistol in hand, while his men stared from behind door and windows.

"You're the cause of all this, mister!" he yelled. "I guess we'd better settle your hash right now!"

But McChesney bent over the mountaineer, and touched the red chest, then pulled his hand away.

"There's nothing I can do," he admitted, looking up. Then, "Great heavens, can't you people put a curb on your tempers?"

The bearded man drew back, puzzled for an instant. McChesney started toward the child but found an arm barring the way. He whirled upon the fellow.

"Must you kill this child, too? Isn't there any plain decency here? Has hatred driven you insane? Stand away!"

The other's arm lowered but his voice rose high.

"No! My claim comes first! Do you think we've rid forty mile over the mountains to nurse a kid? Huh! You sharper, you murderer, you're goin' to fight me man to man, and when I'm through, the kid won't need you!"

McChesney opened protesting hands but closed them. He glanced with baffled eyes at the spectators beyond the open windows. Then he turned to the patient, jamming the stethoscope into the little chest again. The bearded man threw off his coat.

"Come on! Hurry up!"

"I think you're drunk!" cried McChesney over his shoulder.

"We've got to be across the mountains by dawn. Come! Git a move on!"

McChesney straightened. A battle light, the stark, murdering madness that comes from aggravation, flared in his blue eyes. But his clenched fists fell to his sides and his voice dripped weary sarcasm.

"Do you have to keep hold of your gun when you start a fist fight?"

The big fellow looked down upon the pistol, grinned, swung his arm and tossed the thing into a corner, where it lay upside-down.

"I've been waitin' for that!" came a vigorous male voice from the threshold. "Now Martin, stick your hands up!"

McChesney whirled toward the door. The long barrel of a rifle swung around behind it, followed by the loose-jointed body of the sheriff and by other armed men who clattered in behind him. Martin stood petrified, mouth opening, cheeks turning white.

McChesney glanced at the windows, fearing that the bandit's friends would leap to action. But they did not. They stood like wax figures, saying nothing, maintaining their hands and arms with the strained exactness of position which advertised certain shadowed forms and glinting weapons behind them.

The bearded man in the center of the room looked about but saw no avenue of escape.

"Tricked!" he said to the walls.

"Yep, tricked!" echoed the sheriff, plainly pleased with himself. "Slick, wasn't it? You learnt he was comin' here, so you trapped him. I knew you'd do it. I saw your spy leanin' over a buggy in town, listenin' in when the Doc was told that Callie was sick. The Doc didn't see it. He'd just kicked the man out of his office and then he forgot about it. But me, I know you people better. So I trapped you!"

McChesney's patient stirred. He turned toward her again, while the sheriff continued his triumphant babble:

"Accordin' to the rewards posted, it looks like about five thousand dollars worth of bandits here tonight. A fine, large evening! As for this here murder— Whoa! Hold on to Martin, you fellows. Bind him! I reckon this time we've got him to rights!"

There was a great clattering and stamping behind McChesney, and for a moment he watched the passing of the gang and the posse. Then the room became quiet except for the ticking clock, the crying of the girl, and the labored breathing of the child. The sheriff stood and watched, finally stepping forward to the bed. He cleared his throat.

"Sorry I put you in danger, Doc," he apologized. "So far as I can see, this here man on the floor might have been you. But Martin will atone for it, all right!"

The girl looked up at the sheriff. McChesney expected grief but her face pleaded for vengeance, the sort that demands an eye for an eye, even to the last brawling generation. And then she turned her bitter eyes back toward her man. McChesney winced. The sheriff read his thoughts.

"Hot tempers, here in the mountains," said the sheriff. "Some day we'll change, Doc. But it's goin' to be slow work."

McChesney nodded, laying his ear against the stethoscope again.

"What became of the old man her, father?" he wondered, as an after thought.

"Him? He sleeps in the woodshed, back yonder. He's half deaf, anyhow. How's the patient?"

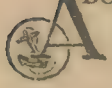
There was a long wait. McChesney tapped the little chest. His face was weary and drawn but his voice became a little more lively.

"I think there's less congestion. She's beginning to rally."

The sheriff nodded. His arm reached out and he patted McChesney's shoulder so lightly that the doctor never felt it, giving the approval of one great man to another. Not the greatness that struts in the limelight, but the greater greatness of the million who keep the world going, those whose hearts are in their jobs.

VANISHED LOOT

by Josiah M. Ward



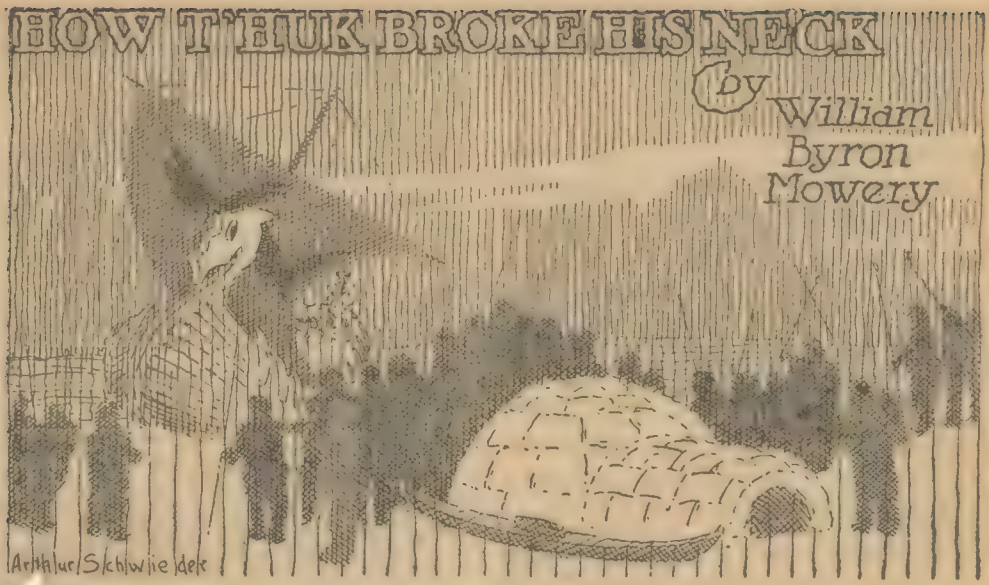
ABOUT one hundred thousand dollars in gold-dust and currency lies buried in a certain Colorado gulch and has been there since 1864. The currency was wrapped in oiled silk and the dust was placed in tin cans. This treasure was interred by Jim and John Reynolds, leaders of a gang of outlaws which terrorized three states during the closing years of the Civil War. By adding murder to highway and stage robbing, they so incensed the citizens of Park County that a posse went forth to exterminate them. It was while in hiding from this posse in Geneva gulch at the junction of Deer and Elk Creeks, which flow into the Platte river, that the Reynolds' brothers, without informing the other bandits, hid their loot.

The exact spot selected for the cache was an abandoned mine tunnel. A near-by tree was suitably marked, and the brothers fled with their gang. One was killed by the posse. Jim Reynolds and four others were killed in a bunch some weeks later. Finally there was but one left alive, John Reynolds. He was shot while attempting, with Albert Brown, to raid a ranch. Brown carried him to a place of refuge and Reynolds, realizing that he was about to die, told Brown about the buried wealth and how to find it. In addition, he drew a rough map of the locality which has descended through photographed copies to the present day. Having done this, Reynolds being full of bullets, gave up the ghost.

Yet, though men have been searching for this treasure for over half a century, it has not been found. Forest fires have swept the gulch and the old tunnel undoubtedly has caved in, burying within its embrace the loot hidden by Jim and John Reynolds in the brief pause of a flight from a posse.

HOW TUK BROKE HIS NECK

by William Byron Mowery



Author of "The Claw Necklace," "Hard Lines," etc.

AROUND-FACED, perpetually smiling chap, this Eskimo, Obadiah, and as amiable as a berry bear in August. Even among the genial frostland folk, his sunniness is remarkable. Middle-aged, thick-set, and hard as nails; indifferent alike to the burning sun of the brief Labrador summer and to the paralyzing cold of its long terrific winter, is Obadiah. A pure-blooded Innuit, without a drop of Indian or white admixture, which is rare to find now on the Labrador.

His snug house squats in the shadow of the Moravian mission, around which cluster the houses of a few score others of his vanishing people. Thanks to the beneficent work of the good mission, the seasons roll by placidly to Obadiah. Life is safe and livelihood is easy. No more do the spindly-legged Nascaupees sweep down in a storm from the *haut d'en pais* rock country and spear sleeping men through the snow walls of their *igloos*.

The Nascaupees, save a pitiful handful, have gone the way of starvation or of contact with white man and his conversation water. Between the remnant of Indian and Innuit, the Moravian brethren have wrought peace; so that now when the caribou *foule* passes, Obadiah goes back into the upland in safety and spears his need of the ugly deer.

In summer, among the everlasting Laurentian hills, he gathers kegs upon kegs of the bake apple and Arctic cranberry which he freezes in water and keeps as a tart against a straight meat diet. He fishes in season for cod, plucks geese for their feathers, and works in the mission garden, the soil of which was brought as ship ballast from Newfoundland. In winter he spears seal, or traps—not settled to one fur-path, but roving along the lacework of islands and reefs and rigolettes of the Labrador coast, building his *igloo* where night or a storm overtakes him, and living for a brief while as his foregenerations lived before white man or mission came.

A curious product is Obadiah—versatile, keenly intelligent, simple-hearted, and startingly well-educated, thanks to the brethren. He speaks faultless German, although quaintly, after the fashion of old Nuremberg whence his teachers came. His English is better than the average liveyere's; his French is understandable; and he talks with the Nascaupees in their own whining, petulant tongue. He is director of the mission band; plays a trombone excellently, despite having to use kerosene on the slide; plays organ for the chapel services, and knows more than a little about harmony and fugue. Indeed he composes at times—simple little works that are unforgettable

because of their strange blend of Christian solemnity with the weird, throbbing minor of savage music.

It was, in fact, one of these songs of his which first put into my head the idea that Obadiah had another, a hidden self. I began to suspect that beneath his piety lurked the superstition of long dark generations; that twenty or thirty years of teaching could only veneer, not eradicate, the savage nature bred during as many centuries. Not that the savagery in Obadiah was an evil, bloody thing; it was merely a tenacious, secret clinging to the old shaman lore, the old folkways, the old myths and hunting-culture impulses.

I mentioned my suspicions to the Reverend Dr. Heberer who headed the mission and who was justly proud of Obadiah, his own personal handiwork. Dr. Heberer did not agree. Obadiah, said he emphatically, had completely forgotten the myths and heathen practises of his fathers. I said nothing more then, and we fell to talking again on the subject uppermost in our conversations during my two months' stay at the mission —the Viking visits, the *vestr-viking*, to America.

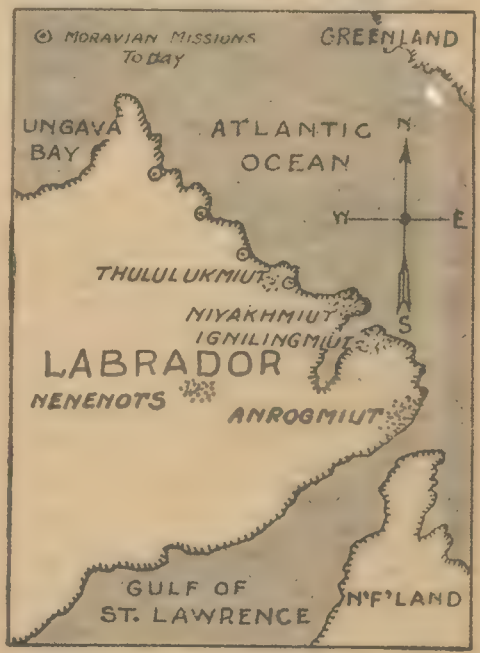
Dr. Heberer was vastly informed on the subject. He dampened my hopes at the outset by saying that he had searched twenty years without finding a clear trace of Northmen ever having visited the Labrador.* And he blasted my hopes completely by proving to me that the stone huts on the near-by islands, whose ruins I had come to examine, had been built by Portuguese fishermen in the third decade of the sixteenth century. But I had stayed on, nevertheless, finding his company stimulating and the ethnological work in the neighborhood very worth while.

I struck up a friendship with Obadiah. Not the hunter-guide sort, but a friendship rather of equality. We went on several trapping expeditions together. In matters of legend and folkways he was very stiff and silent at first, but he thawed when he found that my religion was considerably freer than that of the brethren. There was tacit agreement between us that Dr. Heberer should know nothing of what we said and did.

I discovered that Obadiah still poured fresh water on the nose of his harpooned seal, in order that its spirit might tell other seals of the hunter's kindness. I discovered that he kept a tub of "high" seal flippers secreted in a cove up the rigolette.

And during the long evenings in his snug house I discovered, by hint and innocent question, that Obadiah was full to the ears of shaman lore and Innuit legend. Of these, however, he would never talk. I suspected that he knew things which I wanted to know; but Dr. Heberer had taught him never to mention the old heathen times and stories, and he kept a silence which did credit to his teaching.

It was sheer accident that Obadiah and I were thrown together in a situation where creed and training sloughed off and where



we were simply two humans battling helplessly against man's oldest enemy, nature.

One very dark, murky day we had gone to the edge of the late December ice to kill harbor-seal, that small drab robber of fish-nets. The water smoked and the sea was rough, for "the grampus had lashed his tail." In some manner or other, the big pan we were on got detached from the main shore-field; and, because of the frozen mist, a hundred-yard lead had opened before we noticed that we were adrift.

I was for trying to swim back to the shore-field. That seemed our only chance, for the

*The Vikings knew of Labrador, a fact proved by their name, Helluland, the land of flat stones. But that they ever fished or hunted or built dwellings there, or even landed on the bleak coast has never been proved.

ugly ground-swell was breaking our pan to pieces and the southerly drift was sweeping us out from the headland. But Obadiah shook his head firmly. If he was at all perturbed by our perilous situation, he hid his feelings stoically.

"You could swim ten feet in that water, *kabluna*. Maybe twelve. This drift will take us across the bay mouth toward the south headland. It may throw us against the ice jam there, whence we can walk ashore. Our pan may last that far. Who knows."

"Or the Kraacken monster," I suggested in a rather flat attempt to jest.

I think that Obadiah knew I was quaking in my skin boots. I think that he himself realized, much more clearly than I, that our chances were but little better than nil. But he took it more philosophically, mayhap because danger was his daily experience, mayhap because he was in deep reality a better Christian than I. I think that the tale he told—after we had shouted ourselves hoarse, then retreated to the middle of the pan, shoveled up a wind-break of snow, and crouched there, watching the growlers bite off big mouthfuls of our slob—that the tale he told me was an effort to distract my mind. Said Obadiah in the Innuit:

I HAVE heard, *kabluna*, the talk between you and my teacher about the tall light-hairs whom you call Northmen. I have said nothing, for he would be saddened if he thought that I harbored aught of the old heathenry. Once when I recounted to him a legend of men with tusks and tails, he wept at my belief in the old myths, telling me that the tusks were but lip ornaments and the tails but animal tails left on fur clothing, and showing me how darkened minds, through much telling, thus pervert the truth. So it may be that this tale, which goes back more generations than there are years in my life, is false too. Of that you are judge.

In those days, the Thulululukmiut lived three days' journey south on the coast, and counted three-score hunters, where now only Anata, who waits for me at home, and I are of the blood. The Nenenots in the hills behind the sea were plentiful as wolves, and as fierce. The sea tribes, by bringing together all their hunters in one body when danger loomed, kept them off year after year. And thus the blood feud went on endlessly.

But one winter the sea tribes quarreled among themselves, and would not help one another. Hearing of the quarrel, the Nenenots ganged, came out of their rock hills and inland waters and started the slaying. During the Moon of Hardening Frost they slew the Antogmiut and the Ignilingmiut and the Niyakhmiut, hunters and women and babes. And from slaying the Niyakhmiut they started up the coast to murder the Thulululukmiut, my fathers.

In their winter village on the seashore the Thulululukmiut waited in terror, for the warriors were three to their one hunter. There was no help, to whom runners could be sent. There was no escape, for the women and children could not flee and the hunters would not desert them. So they could but wait, stricken dumb with the certainty of death.

Thorngaek himself must have interposed for his children, the sea tribes, for out of the mouth of the North came a great storm; like the storm, *kabluna*, which only a few years ago cast a hundred broken ships upon this coast and killed hundreds upon hundreds of *kabluna* fisherfolk. While the storm raged, so cold and fierce was it that the hunters could not stir from the tunnels of their *igloos*. The wolf packs sought the deep drifts, and their brothers, the Nenenots, were kept off.

When at last the storm died, the hunters who went out to watch for their blood enemies, saw that it had cast up near their village a ship. But such a ship, *kabluna*, as they had never seen nor heard legend of before. It was five times larger than the largest *oomiak*, and was shaped like a half-moon, low in the middle and high-pointed at the ends. On its prow was the head-half of a strange beast. On its stern was the beast's tail-half. Save in the center, it had huge oars, and in the center reared up a small tree. From this tree hung a broad hair-cloth, red-colored, with flapping ravens inwoven for its ornament.

The ship was manned by exactly a score of light-haired giants.

At that time the headman of the Thulululukmiut was T'huk, a hunter of large prowess and a mighty wrestler, but a braggart, a man of treachery, and quarrelsome. It was he who had brewed the trouble between the Innuit tribes with his lies and

evil reports one to another. Now, though the hill warriors were but a few hours away, instead of counseling peace with the strangers, he urged an attack, for he was ever ready to fight a foe that was weaker in numbers. But the Thululukmiut no longer obeyed him. They turned a deaf ear to his orders and stayed within their village, watching the strangers and listening for the yells of their enemies.

The leader of the giants had seen the snow huts which sat on a small hill back from the fling of salt spray, yet near to the seal spearing. Gliding on a pair of strange, narrow foot-wings, this leader came toward the village alone, armed with a sword and a shield of triple metal, and cried out the word for peace. But T'huk, with another hunter, slunk forward to meet him, and crouched with spears upraised behind a hummock of ice. When he was within a few steps of them, they rose and hurled their spears. The stranger caught them upon his shield, though they came ike darts of light. One he plucked from the snow and tossed back, killing the hunter beside T'huk. But the headman was spared. Stiff with fright, he sank down whimpering. The light-hair caught him, picked him up bodily like a child, and brought him into the village, still crying out the word for peace.

Such a man, *kabluna*, had the sea tribes never before looked upon. He was so tall that not a one of the hunters but could walk under his outstretched arm. His bulk was large and towering, yet so supple and lithe that with all his war gear on he could jump his own length backward. He could break the sturdiest spear shaft between his hands, and could toss a heavy caribou spear farther than a strong bow could arch an ivory arrow. His foot-wings were ivory-shod like *komatik* runners for hard snow. His sword, which was tall as a small man, had a handle of yellow metal, studded with stones that shot fire. His voice was like the sea waves beating against hollow rock, and his eyes were like the sun glinting through blue ice.

His name was Starkard, and the name of his sword was the Neck-Biter.

He could speak the Innuit tongue, though strangely, as the same tongue varies in different lands. In the *kozgee*, where the chief hunters assembled in wonder to gaze at him and to hear his words, he explained that his ship was homing after far-wandering through unknown seas and along unknown lands; that the great storm had been too much for even his men to battle, and had cast them ashore; that he needed wood to mend his ship, and help to put it again in the water, and meat for his men to last until they were back again in their own land, three moons journey toward the rising sun.

T'HUK, whose braggart pride smarted from being carried into the village like a babe, cried out hotly that the strangers should be given not wood and meat, but harpoons and arrows. And he howled an order for those about Starkard to strike the light-haired devil down. But the Thululukmiut had had their fill of T'huk's quarrelsomeness, of his headmanship which had plunged them into all their troubles. Not a hand or weapon was raised against the stranger. While T'huk raged, the chief hunters talked in low voices among themselves, and their spokesman rose and answered Starkard.

The Thululukmiut willingly would give meat and wood and aid to the strangers, as they gave to all strangers who came in peace and asked for aid. But a band of hill warriors, numbering three to their one hunter, were only a few hours away from the village, and would surely fall upon it before the brief day closed. If the village were destroyed, how could it furnish wood and meat; and if the hunters were slain, how could they furnish aid? The strangers were terrifying to look upon and their wargear was mighty. Would they help the Thululukmiut to beat back the onslaught of the hill warriors?

Starkard first asked a few quick questions.

Who had provoked the fighting? Had the Thululukmiut destroyed any lodges of the hill warriors, or slain their women and children?

When he was answered by the spokesman, he agreed with a nod of his iron headdress to help them.

New hope and courage sprang into the hearts of the Thululukmiut and their chill terror fled. For this Starkard seemed like a god come to help them, and he spoke as lightly of the battle as one speaks of a foray to gather eggs in a seabird rookery. They gave him the headmanship, which had been T'huk's. They obeyed his orders without

question, for even the youngest hunter could see that Starkard was war-wise and battle-scarred, and that his temper in battle would be terrifying.

They fitted new barbs to their harpoons and sharpened their spears, but mostly they worked at making arrows and choosing their strongest bows, for so had Starkard ordered. He sent runners out to spy on the march of the hill warriors. He sent to the ship a messenger who returned with ten more of the light-haired giants. They were men like Starkard, but he was easily the leader of them all. They were tall and powerful beyond ordinary men. Their iron head-dresses were inwrought with figures of bird and beast. Their pointed shields were so tall that they covered the man kneeling behind them. They carried swords dangling from their belts, and battle-axes in their hands.

Left in command of the ship was Flom, a dark-haired man, with the face and craft of a fox, in bulk more like a bear than a man.

During this time T'huk kept casting evil looks on Starkard and growling like a dog that has lost its bone. He got out his strongest bow, which none of the hunters but he could fix string to. He strung it and fitted to the string a sturdy arrow tipped with the yellow metal which the Thululukmiut got by barter from tribes that dwelt where the sun set. While the other hunters worked swiftly to fulfill the orders of their new war leader, T'huk played idly with his bow and arrow.

Suddenly his bow twanged sharply. The arrow left the string and struck Starkard on the left breast; struck full, piercing his leather *netsuk*. But before the astounded eyes of the Thululukmiut, it shivered like brittle ice on the breast of the light-hair.

When he saw his treachery had failed because the skin of Starkard could shun even a metal-tipped barb, T'huk ran into a hut and cried out that the arrow had left the string by accident. Starkard could have slain T'huk with his sword and every one would have called it a just reward of the treachery. But instead he laughed loudly and said that if such an accident happened again, his own long sword would accidentally shear off T'huk's head.

One by one the runners returned breathless telling that the Nenenots, bloody and confident from slaughtering the Antogmiut and Ignilingmiut and the Niyakhmiut, were nearing the village. When the last runner came back and the warriors were only an hour away, Starkard ordered his men and the hunters to take up their weapons and follow him.

The older hunters objected, saying that always before they had fought from the shelter of their huts.

"Only cowards run into their houses and fight, where their womenfolk and children are endangered," Starkard answered. "I will show you how men fight who are wise in battle."

That was the first war wisdom which he taught the Thululukmiut. As he led them out of the village, he looked up at the burnished sun and felt the wind, and so planned that the Nenenots would have the snow glare in their eyes and the stinging wind in their faces as they fought. He led them up the valley through which the hill warriors were coming. At a point where the valley narrowed, he arranged them in a strange formation for battle.

Half the hunters, under T'huk's brother who was liked by all the Thululukmiut, were hidden in deep drifts along the gorge slopes. These hunters were armed only with bows and arrows, and were given sharp orders not to shoot a barb or disclose themselves until the valley below them was filled with the Nenenots, so that every arrow would slay.

The other half of the hunters, under T'huk, were armed only with harpoons and spears. They were commanded to stay in the valley level, to meet the first onslaught of the enemy, to retreat orderly and to lure the Nenenots back where the bowmen were waiting to shower death among them. Starkard and his ten men hid themselves behind a curtain of ice that dropped from a summer-time overfalls. When the Nenenots were lured into the trap, the light-hairs would hem them in on the fourth side and they would be slain like ugly deer at the spearing surround.

The Thululukmiut had never heard of such wise battle strategy. Always before, they had fought blindly in packs, like mere wolves.

In one brief hour the Nenenots were come. Their scouts, flung out ahead like wolves circling for a scent, saw T'huk and his men waiting in the valley. They ran back whooping. The main band of Nenenots hurried to meet their scouts. They

raised their war yell and swept down in a torrent to crush the Thulululkmiut.

Though they had faith in the wisdom of the new war leader and though he and his men would be terrible in battle, yet the hunters trembled at sight of their enemy; at the great odds of number, at the gory Innuit scalp coverings strung in their belts, at their ochred faces and red-stained weapons and at the triumph and insatiable bloodlust of their war yell.

In spite of their trembling, the thirty men under T'huk fought like roused bears, and slowed down the onset which they could not stop. Trading spear thrust for thrust, they were forced backward, foot by foot, fighting desperately, though many a one of them stumbled or sank down in the snow. They were brave men, and had faith in the plans which Starkard had shrewdly laid. The Nenenots were walking into the baited deadfall.

BUT it was then that T'huk, the coward and braggart, got sick with fear and threw away his weapons and fled howling. His men, hearing his cry and seeing him flee, thought that the battle plans had failed. A fourth of their number had been slain already, as the price of baiting the trap. The terror of T'huk spread through the others. They broke and fled. The hill warriors leaped after them, spearing them unresisted.

The bowmen under T'huk's brother sprang up and shot their arrows. But instead of shooting at a solid mass of the enemy, they were shooting into a straggly rout, maiming blood-brother and foe alike with the few of the arrows that bit into flesh. The Nenenots sprang up the slope and fell upon the bowmen. Without spears or harpoons to meet the charge, the men under T'huk's brother broke and ran as the others had done. The battle turned into a slaughter of the Thulululkmiut.

At that moment a great roar burst from the ice covert where Starkard and his light-hairs lay hidden, waiting—when the Nenenots should walk into the trap—to close in its fourth side. Singing in one voice a mighty battle song they stood there a moment above the fight, looking down at the slaughter. For that moment the arms of both Innuit and Nenenot were hung in air amazed. For the song of the light-hairs was a terrifying song, the clash of their war gear shivered on the taut air, and the sunglare glittered on bright battle-ax and iron head-dress.

Then steadily, their song in unison with their steps, they moved down the hill to the battle, formed like a wedge, *kabluna*, as the duck string forms in spring and autumn. Their long shields were aligned, their battle-axes whirled in the air and clashing of their weapons was in unison with their strides.

At the point of the wedge strode Starkard, tossing his sword in air and catching it, leading his men and the song.

Sight of the strange giants, bursting suddenly like demons from an ice cavern, would have struck terror into the hearts of cowards, and caused even brave men to flee. But the hill-warriors did not know fear. For a short moment they were paralyzed with amazement. Then their chiefs and subchiefs rallied them, shouting that the new enemy were but a handful. In the flat level of the valley they hurled themselves upon the light-hairs. The battle-wedge split their first charge as a prow splits a wave. The second and third charge split likewise, for at the wedge-tip stood Starkard, swinging his long sword in flashing circles and letting death into the warrior that leaped within reach. Almost a score of the Nenenots were wallowing in the snow, while not a one of the giants faltered nor a note of their song quavered.

But the hill warriors were brave men, braver than the sea tribes, and fighters from their birch-rind cradle to their last breath. Their leaders massed them again, split them under the subchiefs, and surrounded the light-hairs, whose shield-wall now formed into a circle and looked like the overlapping scales of a sea turtle. From all sides the Nenenots hurled themselves by dozens and by scores against the singing strangers.

Back and forth in the purpling valley the battle writhed and howled. In the close-locked struggle, bows were thrown aside. It was battle-ax against spear, solid shield-wall against the shock of odds fifteen to one. Above the screaming of warriors death-smitten and the yells of blood vengeance for the dead, the battle song of the light-hairs stood out like the surf boom of storm tide.

Though the sheer weight of charge after charge pressed the light-hairs back and

forth, though half of them bore wounds that would have been mortal to ordinary men, and though the trampled snow reddened with their blood as well as with the blood of their slain, yet not a man of them dropped and their shield-wall held unbroken.

It seemed that Starkard their leader was Thorngaek himself, and that Starkard's men were the frost giants of the Ice King.

The battle hung in doubt. Like the fiercest of storms, it had soon to end of its own fury. The light-hairs had slain threescore of the Nenenots. But several of them now were kneeling in the snow, still fighting behind their shields like quarried bears, and the others were weakened with bleeding wounds.

The wise old leader of the hill warriors suddenly drew off his men and massed them in one body again, and ordered a last charge that would wash over the shield-wall and end the battle.

But the brother of T'huk had by now rallied the fleeing Thululukmiut and beaten courage into them with his bow and cried shame into them for leaving their allies to bear the whole brunt of a battle not their own. He led them back, massed them and threw them against the Nenenots at the moment when the hill-warriors were raising their shout for the last charge.

A rain of arrows swished into their thick mass and struck down many and wounded more. The hill warriors were trapped. They were caught as a *kayak* is caught between two grinding ice packs. Still they fought desperately, struggling to burst out of the trap and escape. They fought till half of them were slain and till hope of escape vanished.

Then they flung down their weapons, those who survived, and crouched in the snow, not whining, but ready to meet their fate in silence.

The Tuhlulukmiut would have speared the marauders, their blood-enemies, to the last man. Starkard sprang forward flashing his sword, and commanded the hunters to stop.

"Are ye dogs?" he thundered at them. "These are brave warriors, such as are too few among the born of women. They have fought a good fight. Let them take up their wounded and depart. Who lifts a spear against them, by the beard of Odin, I will cleave from his brain to the fork of his body."

The hunters all obeyed save T'huk, who had crept back after the fighting was over. He raised his voice and called to his men that if the warriors should go back to their lodges, the feud would break out again, and that the last warrior should be slain. Starkard picked him up, shook him till his teeth loosened, and tossed him aside into a drift.

"It would be shame," said Starkard, "to foul the Neck-Biter with the blood of a coward."

The Nenenots left in peace. The wounded of the Thululukmiut were carried back to the village. But the wounded of the light-hairs walked back on their own legs, laughing at their bleeding spear-thrusts. And for four-and-twenty hours they did not bind up their wounds.

ON THE day after the battle the Thululukmiut sent *komatiks* after wood to mend the ship. They fitted up lines like those with which they dragged small whales ashore, and pulled the ship to the ice edge again, where it was laden with the meat and oil it could carry. There was dancing and a victory feast in the *kozgee*. And there Starkard stayed, laughing and dancing with Innuit girls, for he was as mighty a lover, *kabluna*, as he was fighter and battle leader.

But while he laughed and danced, treachery threw its net around him.

His subleader on the ship, this Flom, had the cunning of a wolverine, and his cunning worked secretly against his great leader. When the wounded went back to the ship, Flom spoke soft words to them and to the others of the light-hairs.

"For two years now," said he, "have we gone harrying over the whale path. Two years have passed since we sat beneath our sooty rafters and drank mead in our chimney corner. Half of our ship's crew are sword-dead or sea-dead. Starkard has led us far from our homes, on icy seas where only the seabird mews, and along perilous coasts where red-hued *skraelings* assail us.

"For what gain save battle-wounds, and his own thirsty glory of far-wandering? Had we gone south and east from our homeland to the warm rich coasts of the Franks or to the church-houses and burgs of the Angles, our ship had been laden with spoil. Who knows whither he will next point the dragon-head? Let us make ready, and while he is dancing, let us slip quietly away and turn our prow homeward."

With such soft words and wiles, this Flom turned the minds of the light-hairs against Starkard, for they were weary of the trackless sea-path, and yearned for the jutting cliffs of their homeland.

Next Flom spoke softly to the Thululukmiut who were helping make ready the ship.

"Starkard is a mighty war leader. He will teach you cunning in battle and save your *igloos* from the hill-warriors. We will leave him here with you. Keep him busy with feasting, and keep the bladder drum thumping in the *kozgee*. Take away all his weapons secretly. In the morning when we are ready to row away, station half of your hunters here at the foot of this hill, lest he see us as we depart and try to gain the ship."

The Thululukmiut also listened to the treachery of Flom. They wanted as their headsman the great leader whose name would be a terror to their enemies and would save their *igloos* and would make them the mightiest of the sea tribes.

All that night they kept him merry, while Flom hastened to prepare the ship for voyaging. At break of day half the hunters left the *kozgee* quietly and stationed themselves near the ship.

But T'huk, the coward and braggart, who saw his headmanship gone irretrievably if Starkard were left behind, again was traitor to the Thululukmiut. He had heard of Flom's treachery. At the hour when the ship was ready, he whispered in Starkard's ear. The battle leader sprang up with a loud shout and rushed out of the *kozgee*. He heard the frosted creak of oarlock and saw his ship departing, leaving him afar in a strange land whence he could never win home to wife and children and kin. He saw the score of men massed between him and his ship. He looked around for battle-ax or spear. But these had been hidden safely, and the Neck-Biter was on board the sea-craft.

For one moment he stood dazed, rocking on his legs, while Flom the traitor shouted orders to the crew and while the Thululukmiut made ready to seize him and hold him should he try to rush down the slope.

They saw him leap into the *kozgee* again and come out with his foot-wings, which he buckled on his feet. He snatched up a broken spear-shaft for prod, and came gliding down the slope toward the hunters. They massed in his path to stop him. Faster and faster he came, skipping toward them like a swift avalanche. Just when they thought to grasp him, he left the ground as lightly as a bird and sailed high over their heads in a long leap, a leap, *kabluna*, like the flight of a tipheavy arrow. He came to ground midway between the hunters and the ship, like a swan alighting, and glided up to it, kicking off his foot-wings as he vaulted aboard.

Flom raised the Neck-Biter to smite him down, but Starkard bent low to escape the swing, and with the broken spear-shaft cracked the traitor's skull till the Thululukmiut themselves heard the noise of it. With a great shout of derision, he flung the body overboard and gave orders to his men. Their oars plied swiftly in obedience, the ship's prow turned eastward toward the berg march, and in an hour the light-haired giants and their far-roving craft and fearsome leader were swallowed in the distant waves. And to this day, according to the legend of the Thululukmiut, their like has never been seen on this lone coast.

But what of T'huk, *kabluna?* What reward of his double treachery?

He boasted in the *kozgee* that he could equal the battle feats of Starkard, and could do aught of prowess that the great light-hair had done. The scorn of the Thululukmiut stung him to prove his words. He recovered the foot-wings of Starkard at the ice edge, and took them up on a high coast hill and buckled them on.

He started down, faster and faster, even faster than Starkard himself had gone. He leaped high into the air, even higher than Starkard himself had leaped.

But his leap was not the graceful swan-soaring, *kabluna*, as Starkard's had been. It was like the fall of the carrion gull which the skua gives a death-thrust high in air. Over and over he whirled, arms and legs spinning. And he hit on the windswept ice of the beach. His neck was broken in as many places as a neck may be. So that thereafter his brother, who was well-liked, was headman of the Thululukmiut.

OBADIAH rose to his feet as he finished. With the age-frosted tale still ringing in my ears, I looked where his finger pointed. Ahead of us and just a little to our right was a low white mass of heaving ice which jutted out from the south headland. Our

pan had held together miraculously well, but it was going to drift past the ice pack without touching.

"Come!" Obadiah bade.

I followed him to the edge of the pan, wondering. There he caught a thick ten-by-ten slob, and we squirmed out upon the wobbly raft, Obadiah on one side and I on the other, still wondering.

"Now paddle!" he said simply.

"With what?" I demanded. But as I turned my head for his answer, I saw him thrashing the water with his arms in a way which a seal might envy.

We made progress toward the right, a progress of inches. We held our breath, but not our arms, as we bore down on the ice pack. If we missed, beyond lay the open winter sea with night falling. Those last few moments of desperate battling are very hazy. But I can yet hear Obadiah's shout of triumph and his sharp order to spring as our slob rammed into the pack almost at its point. Our call was so close that as we sprang to the ice field our kick sent the slob into the current again and on into the southerly drift.

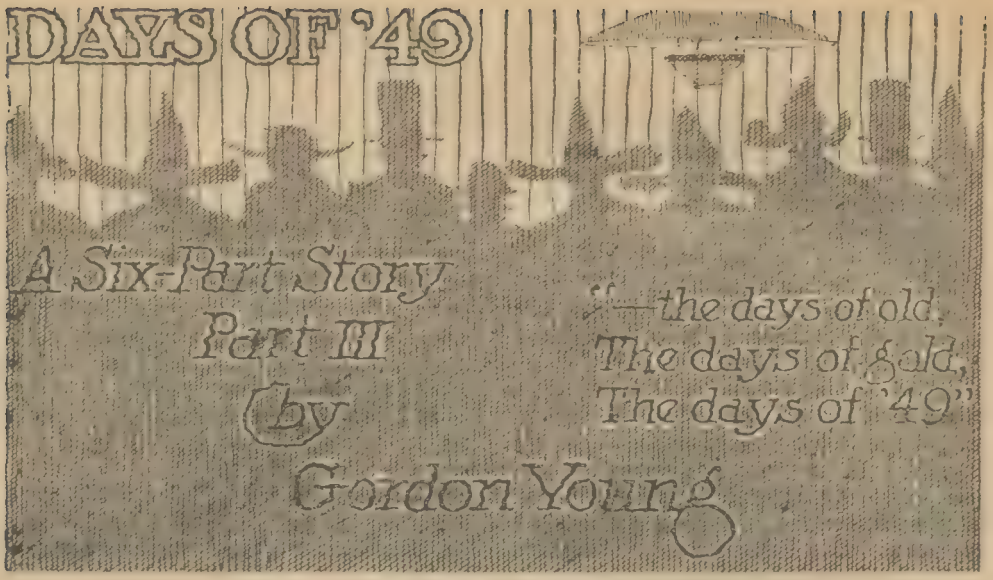
"We had best say nothing of our mishap," Obadiah urged as we raced ashore to start our blood tingling again. "It is a boy's trick to get caught as we did. And this tale of Starkard is not for the ears of the very reverend Heberer, who would weep at the thought of me knowing one of the old heathen legends."

That night in the mission, over our fifteenth cup of tea, our talk drifted, as always it did, to the Northmen's visits. Dr. Heberer gave lengthy accounts of his searches far and wide along the bleak coast, and of his vicarious searches through parchment manuscripts and *incunabula* and the guesswork of moderns, ending, as always he did, with a lament that he had never found a single clue, and that the proof positive was forever buried.

"What knight was it," I queried, as he filled my cup again, "who spent his whole life searching in foreign lands for the Holy Grail and, returning home to die, found it had all the time been there?"

"Sir Launfal, I believe," Dr. Heberer replied, lifting his eyes from the cup to mine. "But why?"

"Nothing," said I, remembering a promise to Obadiah. "Nothing, nothing at all!"



Author of "Pearl-Hunger," "La Rue of the 88," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

INTO the town of San Francisco one July noon in the year 1849 rode Dick Hales, ex-Texas Ranger.

"Where can I find Hubert Lee?" was the question he put to the miners and hawkers in the street.

But Lee was out of town.

As Hales sat on his horse looking about at the people and the town, gold mad, drunken, lecherous, shoddy, he heard cries of "Out of the way, we're Hounds. Hounds are coming," and a party of horsemen led by the infamous and beautiful Dona Elvira Eton rode up to him.

One, Jerry Fletcher, thinking him a Spaniard from his sombrero, lifted his whip, crying—

"Out of the way, greaser."

Hales dragged him from his horse and stood over him, menacing.

"Let that man go, señor," said Elvira.

"Take your carrion," said Hales, "where can I find Hubert Lee?"

Dona Elvira did not know. Hubert Lee was to her but a name, although she knew his arch enemy, the blustering and prominent Col. Nevinson, very well.

She asked Hales his name.

"Hales?" she said, "I have heard that name before."

Noticing a sudden flicker of interest in Hales' eye she tried to pump him as to whom he sought in reality, but he finding that she had no information useful to him, deserted her for the horse market.

There he sold his horse for two hundred dollars and repaired to the Magnolia, a saloon and gambling den run by Monsieur Max. There day and night, apparently never sleeping, sat Stewart Dawes, the gambler.

Hales walked up to him.

"Deal," he said.

He won three times his two hundred and left with a promise to return.

"Days of '49," copyright, 1925, by Gordon Young.

AT THAT moment a ship was docking at the wharf. It was from the Atlantic, and, although it would soon be deserted to the scavengers to convert into rooming-house, saloon, or brothel its arrival was an event, for it brought the great new mirror that was to adorn the Magnolia, and Mr. Tesla, a gentleman representative of a gambling syndicate, who intended to buy the place from M. Max. With Tesla came his daughter Ilona, and Kredra her Basque serving maid, who considered herself a seeress. On this ship also came John Taylor a young lawyer, and Martin O'Day a little cockney in search of gold.

Taylor disappeared into the crowd, and soon, by luck, got into conversation with Judge Deering, a champion of law and order in a city of bandits. The judge took him as his business partner.

The little cockney went to the Magnolia where he was immediately treated to the sight of Stewart Dawes shooting a card sharper. Soon he found himself talking to Hubert Lee who had just arrived from the mines. Lee told him that before he could be a miner he needed five hundred dollars' worth of outfit and a partner.

Just then Lee was whisked off by a friend who told him that Col. Nevinson was trying to outdo him in a business deal, and O'Day bumped into a large, good-natured drunken miner. After some talk these two agreed to become partners and went off to the room of Bill Burton, the miner. But Burton had no money and O'Day was at a loss to know where it was coming from. That night he stole out of the room, filled a bag with street dust and washers and went back to the Magnolia.

As he entered there was a report and a flash. When the crowd separated Hubert Lee lay dead on the floor and Nevinson stood over him with a smoking revolver. Beside him stood the cadaverous Bruce Brace, a member of the cowardly society of Hounds and his constant bodyguard.

O'Day walked up to the table of Dawes. There Dawes was arguing with a young Spaniard, José de Sola.

"Change your bet," said Dawes.

"Señor, I weel not," said José, and Dawes found himself looking into the barrel of a gun. He dealt to the Spaniard and the little cockney, who had crept up and laid his bag on the tray. O'Day won and crept back to his room.

IN THE meantime Nevinson was at the house of Dona Elvira, telling her about his fight with Lee. But she was not interested. This strange iron-faced stranger, Hales, interested her and she wished to find out who it was that Lee knew and Hales wanted. If she could find out she would enlist Ferdinand, a homeless singing vagabond, whose life she had once saved, and who was, therefore, her devoted slave, to draw Hales into an entanglement with her.

She discovered that there was an Anna Hales who had followed the colonel to California. What relation to Hales she was the colonel did not know, but this woman had fallen so low that she now lived in the infested slum, drinking and debauching herself in every way.

Elvira smiled and held her peace.

When the colonel had gone—

"Put me to bed early, Tota," she said to her maid. "I must be fresh tomorrow, for I have many things to do."

BURTON and O'Day were just coming from breakfast with their new wealth when they heard a baby crying. They entered the house from which the sound came. There lay a preacher, his wife and baby all sick and starving.

"How much better to get wisdom than gold," moaned the preacher.

"Ma'am," said Burton to the wife, "here's some money; an we'll get some folks up here ta help ya pretty soon."

He ducked backward and out, and hurried off toward the center of the town, the Plaza.

"There's a parson an' his wife an' baby starvin' back there," cried Burton when he arrived.

The miners gathered round anxious to give money for their help. Thus Ezekial Preble and his family were helped back to health by the miners, and Preble started about the city denouncing sin.

IN THE Magnolia, Hales stood by José de Sola at the Dawes table. Hales and the Spaniard were friends. Though Hales had fought in the Mexican war he had lived in California for many years and had learned to like Spaniards. Hales had once stopped, when travelling, at the rancho of José's sweetheart. He had spoken a good word for José to the girl's hostile parents, and had later traded a horse from the young Spaniard for a fine revolver. He was now trying to buy or win this back, without sucess.

Having failed he turned to the gambling table.

"I'll tap your bank," he said to Dawes.

He won, leaving Dawes bankrupt. Hales offered to bet the whole thing on one card if the Magnolia would bank its game. Dawes walked off. He returned with Ilona Tesla, who in the absence of her father, the Magnolia's new proprietor, was prepared to take the responsibility. Hales won.

"I'll play it all," he said.

But just then Tesla hurried on the scene to drag his daughter away. With him came Col. Nevinson; Tesla just returned in time to prevent a gun-fight between Nevinson and Hales and José, the two latter, the colonel said, having insulted him. "Be here at one o'clock and I will have the money for you," said Tesla to Hales.

When he was alone a negro boy brought him a note from Dona Elvira saying that she had news for him. He waited on her at her apartments. She talked with him, trying to gain information about Anna Hales, his sister, as he said. But *he* forced the information that she had sunk to the lowest part of the Spanish quarter, out of Elvira, and then he left. When he had gone Elvira called her servant and told him to find Anna Hales.

Hales went to the Magnolia for his money. There he met Tesla and told him that José was ready for a fight with any gringo he might see, because his brother Don Esteban had recently had a lot of miners steal his horse and whip him. Don Esteban's friends and relatives, especially José and Don Gil Diego, were out to find the culprits, and would not rest until they had succeeded.

When Tesla had gone Dawes came up to Hales and asked for a loan, implying that he had cheated on the deal to make Hales win from the Magniloa.

Hales knocked the furious gambler down and went to return the money to Tesla.

Tesla was telling his daughter of a ranch of Col. Nevinson's, El Crucifijo, to which he was taking her out of the city.

That night Hales stood at the bar.

"Turn round, Mr. Hales," said the bartender without looking up.

Hales whirled about; his gun blazed three times. Other guns spoke.

When the smoke had cleared Hales and José were standing over several dead Hounds who had been killed in their attempt to assassinate Hales.

José had killed Bruce Brace and Jerry Fletcher.

Next day Anna Hales was brought to Dona Elvira Eton. She was drunk and helpless. Under the scheming talk of Elvira she seemed to repent of her old ways.

At the same time Hales, on the portico of the Parker House, was trying to persuade José to come with him to the mountains to help the travelers into California.

"No, señor," said José, "I must catch the men who took Don Esteban's horse."

"Be sure you kill the right men," said Hales.

"Kill?", said José. "A dead horse does not feel the branding iron. They will live until God blesses them with death. *Mediante Dios!*"

SOME time passed while José sat on the portico watching men. A native Californian, on a travel-worn horse, rode slowly down the street, looking about with the dazed curiosity of a countryman when he comes for the first time into a city. He was a small, half-Indian sort of fellow. The entire left hip of the horse he was on had been branded with a rudely drawn cross in a circle.

José got up and, going down a step or two, called—

"Benito! Benito, this way!"

Benito turned quickly in his saddle, looking to and fro as if half believing the devil was playing tricks; then he caught sight of José standing near a column and spurred his horse into bounds that carried him across the street, as if about to dash up the hotel steps; but he reined up shortly, saluted, grinned, highly pleased with himself.

"God is the best friend! I find you before I am off my horse! My tongue it was saying, 'The —— take such a town that has more people in it than one can speak with in an hour!' I was telling myself, 'I will never find Don José—' then I hear his voice. I bring gold, good news and the love of Don Esteban who gnaws his knuckles and looks in anger upon the ground. We have found one, señor!"

"And he lives?" asks José intently.

"Ha-ah, he lives!" Benito answered with triumph. "Ah, but, señor, he lied to us! In his pain he lied in telling where we could find the others whose faces Don Esteban carries in his eyes. Gringos, gringos! The —— take them off! To lie at such a time. What liars they are, señor! And the country fills so fast with gringos that Don Esteban curses them all, for their very shadows, like grass in springtime, hide whom he seeks. But if he asked for my words, as he does for no man's, and has wool in his ears when you talk, I would tell him that one devil is so like another that the good angels dance when any one is flayed. Now I have been on the way to you since—"

"Enough. Enough," said Don José impatiently. "Your tongue, as ever, rattles like a leaf in the wind."

"The good God, señor, gave me breath to blow words of his making. The *padre* told me when I was a little child, and more honest than a man can be, that Spanish is spoken in Heaven, so why not on earth? If I have that in my mouth which is heard in Heaven, then—"

"So one has been found," said Don José. "But I, Benito, I have learned nothing."

"Our good Don Gil Diego—it was his horse, señor, that they stole—"

"As if I know not that!" said José angrily.

"Our good Don Gil would have killed this gringo. But Don Esteban cries, 'No!'"

"I came up here as Don Esteban sent word for me to do," said José. "I have looked at every horse in this city. I have talked with every dealer of horses. No one has seen the horse we search for. So it must be those men did not come to the city. As you have found one at the mines, the others must be there. I have long been tired of waiting for you to come and show me where my brother waits. Let us go, now!"

"Oh, but señor! Let Benito breathe. This is a city, and I have gold—"

"Gold?"

"Ho, enough to buy an infidel from the devil," said Benito, slapping at a pouch at his saddle horn. "There is more gold in this country than—"

"How came *you* with gold?"

"Don Gil gave it to me, for you, señor. Many horses were sold," said Benito, just about as convincingly as if he had told the truth.

"I have no need of it. I'll get my horse. We leave at once."

"Oh, but señor, I am hungry as a *padre* on fast day. I have not eaten!"

"Drink of air and bite sunshine as we ride. That is food enough for a *vaquero.*"

"But I starve, señor!"

"Bite on your tongue, Benito. I like your silence."

"*Por Dios!* If you think I talk, wait to hear Señor Ferdinand! Ho, a merry fellow, full of song and wit. He makes gringos laugh when they fear death and give up their gold. It is better than a fandango to watch him rob them!"

"Name of the ——!" cried Don José. "What have *you* to do with robbers?"

"God punish the wicked!" said Benito in pious alarm, cringing before José's glance. "I have but heard him boast and act out what he has done. But I am sure he lies, señor, for the fun of talking. He gave me bed and food last night at his rancho. We will stay there tonight—"

"We will eat from saddle bags and have the earth for a pillow. How does it come you know this man?"

"Ah, señor," said Benito showing a most injured air, but he looked watchfully to see if Don José believed, "you fly in a rage at poor Benito who would not steal a bone from a dog. Don Gil one day brought him into our camp with his guitar. As he departed, this wicked Ferdinand told us of where he had a home, and said there was a welcome for honest travelers. I remembered this when night came upon me and his house

was near. It is called the Cowden rancho. Before God, señor José, I speak as it is written by the Angel who keeps the Book of Man's Deeds!"

Don José, with many things in his own mind, had scarcely more than half listened.

Within an hour they rode together from the city, Benito munching tortillas and drinking wine from an earthen bottle, but not so busily as to keep his tongue quiet.

IT WAS on this same Sunday morning that Martin O'Day and Bill Burton reached Sacramento.

"We're not going to spend a dollar more than's need for the outfit," Burton said. "We'll keep the rest of it for good luck."

A fellow, tall by nature but bowed as if the bones inside of him that hold a man straight had begun to crumble, came up to Burton, greeting him with the pitiful eagerness of one glad to see a friend who is generous. His face was long and well-shaped, but whisky, like acid, had eaten into his features; his cheeks were covered with gray and black bristles as if, now and then, trying to pull himself back to decency, he shaved. The man's eyes were a bit blurred, his voice was husky, but his words were chosen with the air of a gentleman and there was a certain poise in his very beggary.

"Ah, Mr. Burton, sir! You are yet in California? Pleased to see you. How times have changed, Mr. Burton! When I first met you at the mines—"

"'Lo, Cowden," said Burton.

"I have not been fortunate in my speculations, but—er—if it won't inconvenience you, sir—a slight—eh—ah—"

"I believe I owe you a couple of ounces," said Burton, who owed him nothing. "Glad to have you 'mind me."

"Ah, surely, Mr. Burton, you don't think I would speak of so small a matter if—thank you, sir. Thank you."

"Cowden, why don't you go back to your ranch? You used to say whether or not you found gold you still had that to go—"

"I have sold it, Mr. Burton. Yes. Yes. I sold it to Col. Nevinson, quite recently when he was up here. Good day, and thank you sir. Thank you."

He hurried off with doddering haste toward the nearest saloon.

"There's one fellow this gold's sure played —— with," said Burton. "He come to California eight or ten years ago. Married a Spanish girl. Her father's rich. Old Cowden had a ranch he used to talk about, somewhere near the city. Had ever'thing a man wants, or ought to want. Plenty to eat, nothing to do. First off, he joined the rush. Got to gamblin', drinkin'. Now look at 'im!"

XXI

COWDEN'S ranch, until the coming of Americans, was not known as Cowden's ranch, but as El Crucifija.

The native Californians, as with Spanish people everywhere, did not feel there was anything incongruous in naming a boy Jesus, a girl Maria de la Concepcion, a meager group of mud houses the pueblo of La Reina de los Angeles; and so suggestive a landmark as the dead oak that stood before the *rancho* could not escape the significant name of El Crucifijo.

Legend told that the tree had died when an early *padre* was killed by Indians as he stood under it, with cross upraised and breast bared to the arrows; and, pierced like San Sebastian, he fell. The roots, touched by martyr's blood, withered.

The figure of trunk and limbs was remarkably suggestive of a cross, though pious hands with axes perhaps, must have had something to do with clearing away such limbs and branches as obscured the fitting monument that God, who knows all things, those that have been no less than those that will be, had been some hundreds of years in raising to commemorate the brave *padre;* for it was a large oak.

El Crucifijo Rancho was very old, as the works of men had age in California. Part of the high adobe wall still stood where it had been raised when there was danger from Indians. There were many buildings, particularly for a Californian *rancho*. Legend, somewhat authenticated, said that an early Spanish governor had selected this for the estate upon which he meant to spend his days when military and political services were finished; and that he had used soldiers and Indians in the construction, which accounted for its magnificence, now greatly dimmed. But the *padres*, seldom if ever for any length of time wholly reconciled to

the military authorities, succeeded in having this governor recalled; and the principal reason for the summons was his misuse of labor in building a place in which to retire.

Such sensitive superstitions as those of a simple people who contentedly did nothing more, and needed to do nothing more, than eat, sleep, dance, ride horseback and believe in God, could not fail, after the traditional death of the martyr and the historic recall of the governor, to regard El Crucifijo as a place of shadows; and either because the facts did bear out the superstition, or because the superstition took notice of only such happenings as were suitable to its maintenance, this place had a dark name and was much neglected until the coming of the Englishman, Cowden.

He arrived one day in Yerba Buena from a trading ship; he had some money, a kindly nature, and, most important of all, punctilious manners. In those pastoral days, and not until runaway sailors by their rudeness and lewdness had become objectionable, there was no prejudice against foreigners, and some five or six hundred were settled in California before the gold rush.

Cowden readily became a Catholic, married a Spanish girl of wealthy family and, having an Englishman's disregard of other people's superstitions, liked El Crucifijo, which was a beautiful spot, and established himself there. But when gold was discovered the curse of El Crucifijo fell upon him.

It was here that Col. Nevinson brought Mr. Tesla, his daughter, and Kredra.

At the second meeting between Col. Nevinson and Ilona, he said with fierceness:

"Young lady, if any other man had spoken to you as I did this morning, I'd horsewhip him, sir! I'd whip the scoundrel to an inch of his life! I can't apologize fittingly, because I dare not use language that would express what I think of myself!"

Ilona, a little startled, and hardly knowing what to say, said that she forgave him.

Col. Nevinson had provided horses, and a man with a mule to carry baggage. Kredra protested against their riding faster than the muleteer, who, taking her for an ordinary servant, had tried to be agreeable and made her angry. She expressed doubts as to his honesty, felt he should be watched.

"As you are a witch-woman," said Ilona, "you know the poor honest man will steal nothing."

Toward the end of the afternoon they came to the ranch, and though the land was hot and dry, there were many live oaks and burr oaks through which they rode; and not far from the ranch was a tall fringe of green along the dry bed of a river where springs, or an underground flow, gave moisture to the soil. There was beauty in the contour of the hills, low and rounded, and in the hazy vagueness of distant hills and mountains. The land was almost entirely without undergrowth, and the trees stood as if in a park.

As they approached near to the *rancho* they heard, in the stillness of the late afternoon, a deep musical voice accompanied by a plaintive strumming on a guitar.

"Ferdinand!" said Col. Nevinson, with no tone of joy. He had thought Elvira's man was at the mines.

A dog barked. Other dogs came out with galloping excitement and barked loudly to show how alert they were. They barked at Americans only, never at Spaniards.

Ilona had reined up and was staring at the great bare trunk and two out-spread branches of the dead oak.

"How like a cross!"

When she looked again toward the house she saw a big shaggy-headed man standing where the glow of the afternoon sun, partially obscured by foliage, fell slantingly on his face and breast. From half of his breast down he stood in a shadow. He was bareheaded, his hair was dark and tangled as if never combed. In age he was at least forty or more; tall as the average man, but appeared shorter because of his immense breast. His face was as beardless as a young man's, for he considered the day unlucky on which he did not shave. He wore a velvet sash about his waist; his shirt was open at the throat, sleeves rolled back on his thick arms. There was the glint of loop earrings under his hair. He smiled, showing even white teeth, but there was now a wary steadiness in the way he looked from one to another.

"HELLO there, Ferdinand," said Col. Nevinson, almost more friendly than Mr. Tesla had heard the Colonel address any other man.

"A-hoy-O!" said Ferdinand, with a familiar flourish of his hand.

He had a rich voice, at once powerful and

smooth, and spoke English with an odd trace of accent.

"I thought you were at the mines," said Col. Nevinson, plainly wishing that he were at the mines.

Ferdinand laughed. He laughed readily, as if he found much in the world to make a man merry; his manner toward every one was nearly always pleasant, or at least cheerful. There could be a difference between his pleasantness and cheerfulness, as many people had learned. But somehow he had an almost insolent indifference as to whether or not he was thought agreeable. It pleased him to be merry; he seldom appeared to care if it pleased others.

Now one hand toyed with the strings of the guitar, absently picking a little rhythm as if there was so much music in his fingers that they could play tunes by themselves. He looked carefully at Mr. Tesla, glanced with indifference at Kredra, and stared, smiling, at Ilona. Then with a broader smile he answered Nevinson:

"O-ho, up to the mines people work too hard for Ferdinand to be happy there. They get up in the dark an' wait for the sun so they can deeg gol'. They stand in col' water to here"—he made a pass at his throat—"an' deeg. They do not eat for fear they won't fin' some of that gol' while they cook. When the sun goes down, they cursé heem an' go to bed an' dream of gol'. When they find them gol' they get drunk. They are beeg fools."

"Ferdinand, this is Mr. Tesla and his daughter. They are going to stay here awhile. Where is Mrs. Castro?"

Castro had been a sort of overseer on the ranch for Cowden, had lived there for many years.

Ferdinand bobbed his shaggy head in friendly greeting toward Ilona; then:

"Señora Castro she went yesterday, or it was the day before, or yet the day before that—such a fool's head I have for numbers!—to Soñora, to Sonoma, to some place, my Colonel. I don't know where the mother lives. Maybe her mother she do not live. Some people do not tell the truth always when they look for excuses to go away. Señor Castro he went too. When they come back they do not say. Señora Castro she talk talk talk so much she got no time to say when she comes back. Maybe they went to deeg for gol' an' don't come back."

"That makes it bad, Colonel," said Mr. Tesla. "Impossible."

It was under the care of the Castros, whom Nevinson had recommended, that he had expected to leave his daughter.

"And —— queer," said Col. Nevinson. "I don't understand their going off without letting me know."

He swore hotly under his breath at the Castros, as if snapping oaths at them.

Kredra climbed down as if half falling. She was too weary to grumble.

"See that the horses are put up, Ferdinand," said the Colonel. "Then come and help us find something to eat."

Ferdinand carefully hung his guitar on a wooden peg that jutted from the adobe wall of the house and came forward to take the reins of the horses. As he passed Kredra he said to her in Spanish—

"Bloom of the Orange, do you like love-songs?"

She scowled angrily, for hers was the arrogant virginity of a priestess.

"Ah, we will be good friends," said Ferdinand, winking, teasing her.

"God has kept beard from your face so men could see the devil in it!" she retorted.

Ferdinand grinned, pleased. He liked a sharp tongue in women.

He gathered the reins of the horses and motionlessly watched his guests, for whom he had only a doubtful welcome, pass through the doorway.

When they were out of sight he called—

"Pedro? Pedro! Son of a turnip—*Pedro!*"

"Si, señor. I come!"

"Use your breath for running, not words, Empty-Skull."

The small Pedro came running clumsily, and grinning—

"I am here, señor!"

"Listen, Tail of a Dog, when did Señor Castro and the señora depart?"

"I do not know, señor, for many days run together like drops of water and may not be counted. But it is a long time now."

"Idiot! It was two days ago."

Pedro nodded rapidly—

"Two days, señor. Yes." He held up a finger of each hand to show that he understood. "It is in my mind now."

"Why did they go, Pig-Ear?"

Pedro grinned in a way that wrinkled his face from forehead to chin.

"Because the good Señor Ferdinand said,

'I love you so well it makes me unhappy to see you work so hard. Here is a club and here is a little gold. If you stay till tomorrow's sun puts his nose in my face, I will teach you the *bastinado*. If you go now, you may have the gold, but the *bastinado* waits for your return. Besides, Rascals, you have sold cattle and kept the money.' "

"O-ho, what a law clerk was spoiled in the making of a *vaquero*! The devil loves you to put so many lies in a mouth no bigger than a miser's heart! Señor Castro and the Señora went to visit the Señora's mother, who is near death. She told you so much. It is not for me to know anything of stealing. Put away the horses and tell the truth always. Hear, Turnip-Head?"

"Si, Señor," said Pedro, bobbing in appreciation of the joke, which he understood but imperfectly, but well enough for his needs. He worshipped Señor Ferdinand as he should have worshipped some one more likely to be canonized.

Taking the reins of the horses, clucking and jerking at them, he marched off through the twilight.

FERDINAND looked toward the windows where candle light was now flickering, and held conversation with himself—

"Why he brings a woman that has so much beauty is something the devil could tell me if he would. This is my house, and what is mine is the good Dona's, and since he belongs to her, too, the devil owns us all. That young girl has more beauty than another woman can want in the world except on her own face. I know the good Dona. She will be jealous, and the good Dona has an evil heart when she is jealous. My colonel will learn wisdom yet!"

Ferdinand's primitive reasoning as to the ownership of El Crucifijo was about as near the truth as could be reached by a man who had only the vaguest regard for what constituted ownership of anything by anybody. What a man could get and keep was his. That was the law of all the countries Ferdinand had ever visited and he had been a great wanderer. But this time he had gone to the trouble to be honest, since land was difficult to carry off and hide. Elvira had told him the land had been bought, and Ferdinand felt that it was his. Elvira, who had kept Ferdinand's money, quite naturally expected the colonel to give it to her, as he had, in all sincerity, said that he would. Thus three persons, not unreasonably, regarded the *rancho* as his or her property.

Ferdinand, whom the devil with especial care had tutored in knavery, had selected El Crucifijo as a fine place for him and such of his friends as he had picked up to rest quietly between the labors of gold-hunting, since it was situated well off a traveled road, and at that a road little used by miners, who might take undue pleasure in again meeting a man they knew but slightly. El Crucifijo was more than a hundred miles from the mines, which, though it meant a few days travel to go and come, greatly lessened Ferdinand's chances of being found by people he did not want to see.

Very recently most of Ferdinand's friends had been taken under the leadership of a short stout savage man, one Don Gil Diego, friend of Don Esteban de Sola. Ferdinand knew all about Don Esteban, and also knew where the horse was for which they searched. This was quite natural, since the horse was now, and had been for some time, at El Crucifijo. But Ferdinand always felt that a secret was sufficiently well known if he alone knew it. Besides, there were many, a great many, de Sola horses scattered through the land; and if he were ever to be questioned by that savage Don Gil Diego, Ferdinand could say in what way did he, a sailor-man, know one horse from another? But he had kept the horse well out of sight nevertheless.

Ferdinand had felt that the Castros, though, now and then tempted beyond discretion by the high prices of foolish gringos, they had sold a horse or two, were too honest for him to trust. They hardly knew what authority he had, but when he said "Go!" there was that about him which made them ready to go, and without a thought of seeking and complaining to Col. Nevison, who was a mad gringo.

XXII

THE tallow candles burned dispiritedly. The room was too large for them. Their flame did not carry so far as their odor.

It was a large room, low of ceiling, with rough-hewn beams. The floor had been laid with tiling, which by long use was worn, broken and in some places depressed into

the earth. One familiar with California houses would have known that an Englishman or American had once lived there by the huge fireplace built in at one end.

Señora Cowden, when, with her children, she had returned to her father's home had gone on a *carretta*—a low Spanish wagon, whose wheels were four segments of a great tree—and carried away such furniture and belongings as would seem to be the property of a discarded wife. In this dining-room remained a few chairs, fastened more firmly than with nails or glue, by rawhide; and a large rough-hewn table, where many a joyous company had feasted on beef, roast pigeon, green corn, sauce of peppers, tomatoes, garlic and parsley; *tortillas*, stewed beans, *panocha* for women and children who liked sweets, tea, and wine from the vineyards of San José for everybody. A rude fare, but stomachs were strong and hearts light. The dishes were of baked clay; the forks and spoons of horn; the knives were such as men carried in belts and leggings, with which they cut the throats of cattle.

When Ferdinand entered the room Kredra was sitting in a chair where she had dropped patiently. It made little difference to her where she might be as long as Ilona was near. Col. Nevinson, in low sharp tones, was expressing himself wrathfully to Mr. Tesla regarding the departure of the Castros. Ilona, with hand resting against a corner of the table, looked about with mild interest at the large, nearly bare room.

"Hi—oh!" said Ferdinand, and his fingers rippled carelessly across the strings of the guitar. Ilona looked at him and her face brightened. It was as if a magician had entered and scattered the shadows. The room did not seem so dark, nor so bare and lonely.

"Now soon we will eat. Ferdinand was once cook to the King of Spain"—he bowed low—"Ah, if the good God had but give us two mouths as he did ears! How much more pleasure! Eat and drink at the same time!"

He laughed and put the guitar carefully into a chair, and, as he talked, got more candles, lighted them one by one, stuck them on the table.

"Ho yes, my colonel, I was at the mines and saw them hang men. 'Tis not ever' stout lad the devil loves so much as to let heem dance at his own death. At the mines, if you keel some fellow you hate—good! But if you steel his pick an' shovel, you are the fruit of a pine tree! Hones', I speak true. Ferdinand never tol' more than two lies in his life, an' both to women, so they are not remembered in Heaven. You beleeve me, Señorita?"

"Yes," said Ilona, laughing, for one could hardly help laughing at Ferdinand, "I believe you have lied to women."

"Come, Flower of the Lemon—" this to Kredra—"I will show you the keetchin."

For the next hour Ferdinand was hardly silent. He moved back and forth from the kitchen to the dining-room, scattered pottery dishes over the table, told stories, sang snatches of song, teased Kredra, but with it all somehow maintained a careless air of dignity, which marked him as one who had never served anybody, except willingly. He brought a jug of wine and teacups.

"—blood of the grape. An' Senor Death some day puts us all into his wine press."

Pedro, hat in hand, poked his head through the doorway.

"Now what, Turnip?" demanded Ferdinand.

"A man that leads a mule, señor. With baggage for the señorita."

"Into the room of Saints, Don Turnip. Ho, I myself will go an' see that for once you do as I tell you."

He went out of the door, leading little Pedro by the ear; and from afar they could hear him greeting the muleteer, demanding to know if he was a good Christian, vowing that he, Ferdinand, would allow none but good Christians to get drunk in his house; saying—though it was a dark night—that he could see the muleteer had a mouth all puckered out of shape by being so much at the edge of a bottle.

"I like that man," said Ilona.

"But of course, Miss Tesla, you can not remain here!" said Col. Nevison.

"I suppose not," Ilona agreed, looking about her. "But after all, Father, why *not?* I would have no uneasiness."

"Impossible!" said Mr. Tesla quickly.

"The fault is all mine. But the Castros were good people. I'd like to tan their hides for them, leaving—"

"Who is this man?" asked Ilona.

"Er—I know but little of the fellow. A friend of mine—ah—to whom he is devoted has vouched for him. Of course, because of his friend, I let him come and go as he pleases."

"It would seem that he almost thought he owned the ranch, Colonel," said Mr. Tesla.

"True, sir. And that is something about the fellow I do not like," the Colonel answered.

"There is something about the rascal that I *do* like," said Ilona. "And you, Kredra—" Kredra was entering with a wide platter of juicy steaks—"what do you think of him?"

"That he would be nearer Heaven if he had died young," said Kredra, indifferently.

THEY were at the table when Ferdinand returned. Before he entered they could hear his voice rippling in song about some far-off girl whose smile was as the glow of the summer's sun, as the warmth of the autumn grape.

"Señorita, Saints will guard your sleep—" he seized a heavy chair, and with ease swung it to the table. "They are wax saints—" he dropped into the chair—"but since God is God, Señorita, may not wax have as much power to fight evil as flesh?"

With that he drew a knife from his sash, a long heavy knife, half rose from his chair, reached well across the table, stabbed a steak and left a trail of juice and grease all the way back to his plate.

Col. Nevinson made a gesture of anger and very nearly exploded into wrath. He thought this fellow had no business at the table with them anyhow; but though the colonel would acknowledge fear of no man, he did have some dread of Dona Elvira's anger; and she was likely to be very exasperating and annoying if she misunderstood—as an offended Ferdinand could make her misunderstand—about Miss Tesla. In fact, the colonel watched Ilona with increasing interest and admiration from minute to minute. She was young, a perfect lady, beautiful.

Both Ilona and her father were interested, entertained by Ferdinand; table manners were not to be expected of such a robust barbarian, who ate carelessly, drank noisily, and was as unconscious of not being among equals as if he were the King of Spain in disguise. Kredra had retired to the kitchen.

"I have been in twentee countries an' on ten oceans," said Ferdinand, waving a tea cup by way of illustrating the length and breadth of his travels, "an' because men are evil to the innocent, in many prisons. But nevare in such a countree as this California. At the mines where men deeg deeg deeg for gol' they do not have *policia*, no *gendarmes*, no law's man, no books of the law, not a black robe, not a wig. Yet they wheep men for being such fools as to get caught when they steel. They hang men quick as a *vaquero* like Don Pedro Turnip-Head jerks down a cow, an'—it is truth!—more men for steeling than if they keel somebody. My Colonel, you are much at the mines. Is it not true?"

Col. Nevinson, a bit bored, but noticing that Ilona listened attentively, nodded. It was true; and the widely traveled Ferdinand had spoken earnestly of something that greatly puzzled him.

"When a man, Señorita, has a wrong, he can go to no officer. He tells ever'body, an' ever'body, though they deeg deeg as if gol' had legs an' would run off if they do not catch heem quick, drop them their picks and shovels an' hold a meetin' to hear the man's wrong. They have such a hurry to hang somebody queek so they can get back and deeg deeg deeg, that the mine-camps is no place for the hones' man like me, who the devil so hates that many times he has had me accused— Ah, Señorita, they hang you so queek you do not have the time to sing—only to dance, an' Señorita, I shall die with a song in my throat or be unhappy. There is nothin'—"

Kredra's voice, rising higher and higher in harsh strange outlandish words, bearing curses, came rattling in upon them.

Pedro and the muleteer, being men with stomachs, had, as they were used to doing in whatever houses mealtime found them, gone into the kitchen and begun dipping into the food. Kredra glowered and may have muttered a little; but when, taking her for a kitchen wench, and not a bad favored one, they added to words she did not understand attempted caresses that she understood perfectly, her anger flared into the speech of her birth, and her curses were curses that would nearly have melted their bones had they understood a word of what she was saying.

Ferdinand broke off in the middle of a sentence, listening. His gesturing hand remained motionless in mid-air; his open mouth opened the wider and hung wide, and his eyes took on a staring astonished fixity. Slowly, as if moving in a trance,

with amazed, incredulous glances from face to face of those at the table, he pushed his chair back, then sprang toward the kitchen.

"——!" cried Col. Nevinson in his mildest oath. "The fellow is mad!"

AS FERDINAND entered the kitchen, Kredra's unwelcome lovers stood with laughter, backs to the door, and made gestures as if about to give her caresses that she would not have.

Pedro was the nearest to the door. He turned the flash of a startled glance over his shoulder at the sound of heavy feet, then, being seized by neck and thigh, he went through the back door and into the court yard, thrown bodily. The muleteer, after a moment's stupefied gaping, for his wits were too slow to be of the best service, turned and would have run; but Ferdinand caught him, shook him, struck him, hurled him to the floor, kicked him until the wretched man with a rolling and tumbling scramble got out of the door and, bowed by aches and bruises, went moaning and groaning into the darkness.

Ferdinand turned on Kredra, who stood with her back against the wall, and she was now in more uncertain amazement than she had felt anger. Her deep black eyes searched him with a burning doubtful gaze, for though his wrathful blows pleased her, she wanted jealous gallantry from him less than she had wanted caresses from men of whom she had no fear.

"By the Sacred Oak and Moon," cried Ferdinand in a low voice, using an ancient oath of the Basques and the tongue of the Basques, "you are a woman of my people!"

"You—you?" asked Kredra, wondering at her ears. "Basque!"

"In twenty years I have not heard my mother's speech! You are a woman of the Blood! And she—the Basque serve only whom they love! Who is she?" he demanded, pointing toward the dining-room.

"Daughter of a daughter of the House of de Ruz! I live but to die for her."

"De Ruz! God will guard her! And loves me! And he, her father, who is he?"

"Her father," Kredra answered simply, as if that were sufficient honor for any man. "But you, why are *you* here with so much evil on your face?"

Ferdinand with a tired abstract gesture passed his hand across his face as if to wipe away some speck noticed there, and speaking quietly as one does who is looking far back into the memory, he said:

"As a lad with my knife I waited among the rocks by the mountain road until the officer of the King's men rode by. There were men at his back, but I was mad with waiting and the Oath of the Knife had crossed my lips. I leaped out, high as the bow of his saddle. I put my knife into his heart and left it there, for even then I could throw the knife as well as now. I went as wolf goes down the rocks where horsemen could not come. Their bullets touched my hair, but not my blood! With dogs and men of arms, with rewards that stirred —— Gipsies to seek me, they searched the land, but the women of my people who had cursed the dead lord said prayers for me, and I was not found. And when the King's men would take my brothers to the garrote because they could not find me, it was Francesco de Ruz who said, 'No! Not while one rock of these mountains stands upon another!' "

"E-ah! He was the father of her mother! And I know of you!"

"And so I went into strange countries, and over all the oceans of the world, and from that day to this hour I have been a man whose heart sang though—" he brushed up the tangled hair from the sides of his head—"men of the law have cut my ears, and—" he reached with his left hand toward his right shoulder—"they have burned me with iron, and though—" he pointed to his ankles—"I have worn their chains, and though—" he put both hands to his neck, as if strangling himself—"the rasp of their hemp has scratched my throat!"

Kredra looked at him with humble respectfulness. The wretch of a lord who commanded a detachment of soldiers, maddened with wine and insolence, had made prisoner for a night a young Basque girl; she escaped, told her story, then leaped from a rock; and the young Basque to whom she was betrothed took the Oath of the Knife. The story was well known.

Said Kredra:

"I have told my Little One of you a hundred times, and blessed you as I told. As a child that lisped, she loved you. Your name is told to little boys when they are taught the noble deeds that Basques have done."

"Oh-ho," he cried excitedly, "this gold-land has done some good in the world since it brings the speech of my own mother to my ears! Down, sit down, daughter of the Blood, down, and talk with me!"

He squatted at her feet on the floor, like one who means not to move for hours, and began a thousand questions; but Kredra answered in haste, and made him follow her into the next room.

XXIII

COL. NEVINSON sat at the table across from Mr. Tesla and listened with an air of perplexed irritation. He, being a man of one tongue, understood not a word that was being said, for they talked Spanish; and he, usually the most important in any group, was not used to having conversations lifted, beyond reach of his understanding. It was, sir, bad manners; and if the colonel had expressed what he felt, not only then but as a matter of permanent belief, he would have declared that the English language was good enough for anybody at any time, the world over, sir!

Now and then he lifted a candle's flame to his cigar, which died out repeatedly. He bit and clamped it between his teeth, shifting about in his chair. He frowned inquiringly toward Tesla, and in puzzlement toward Ilona, whose eyes were aglow, whose small hand fluttered in delight toward her father's arm as she happily looked and listened to that piratical scoundrel, Ferdinand, whom even the sullen Kredra also watched with admiration. Col. Nevinson could not understand it, though Mr. Tesla had tossed to him fragments of explanations. But Ilona was happy, and she looked very beautiful in her happiness.

This gold, gold of California, that drew people as if with strings on their feet, from every nook and corner of the world, had reawakened in the shadows of the Sierra Madres a tradition that had been woven into the enigmatic speech of the Pyrenees; a speech that has completely baffled philologists, and which, so the Basques maintain with assurance, was spoken by Adam and Eve.

When Ilona gave her father a goodnight kiss on the cheek, and Col. Nevinson so pleasant a parting that he almost pardoned the outlandish gabbling that had irritated him, Kredra followed her and Ferdinand went before, candle in hand, showing the way to the Room of Saints.

It was a small dark room, dark and chilly in the daytime, of thick walls with rusty iron grating and no glass at the single deep window. There had never been glass. In niches of this room there were three or four small, rudely fashioned wax figures in tarnished garments and covered with dust. Some pious hand in years past had put them there, and no one had ever been sufficiently impious to put them out, or sufficiently devotional to carry them off. Halos were over their heads, and the upright splinters at their backs plainly enough showed what held the halos in place.

Ferdinand, for all of the use he made of God's name, had long before had the Catholic traditions and ancient folk lore with which his people were permeated, knocked out of him; but, like many a rascal, though he had no love of God or fear of the devil, he was primitively superstitious; and being wholly uneducated, he respected the religion of other people, which was something. he would not do with their property Though Basques have a good name for every sort of honesty, excepting in that they are unequalled as smugglers, Ferdinand had turned to roguery largely because he thoroughly enjoyed roguery; and he had a sort of self-reliant contempt for all the laws on earth excepting those of the Basques.

But this night as he entered the room of the Saints, candle in hand, he crossed himself, feeling sudden emotions that he could not have explained had he tried.

The bed was large, with four high thick posts, as if to bear a canopy, but there was no canopy. The bottom of the bed was a webbing of wide strips of rawhide; on this Ferdinand had spread dry grass, for Señora Cowden had carried off the cushions. Over the grass he placed well tanned hides, still strong with odor, but his nose, being used to the smell, knew nothing of that. Over the hides were blankets.

On the dark wall at the foot of the bed was an imprint very like the white shadow of the cross. Here for many years had hung the crucifix to which Señora Cowden paid her devotions. One who was superstitious might feel that so divine a figure had imparted its essence to the place where it rested; which, in a way could be true without being miraculous, for weather-wear and

dust had stenciled there the outline of that symbol to which the good señora had prayed in thankfulness when her husband loved her, and before which her tears had fallen when gold-hunting, strong liquor, and God alone knew what other agencies of the Evil One had turned him into madness.

Ferdinand, having lighted other candles, pounded the bed to show its soft thickness, pointed to the piece of mirror, which was all that was left on the *rancho* to tell the truth to a woman when she was alone, paused at the doorway in withdrawing, and said earnestly:

"Rest in peace, in great peace little one. God, his Saints, and Ferdinand guard you!"

Mr. Tesla told the story of Ferdinand to Col. Nevinson; adding—

"So, Colonel, with your permission, I will have my daughter remain here until I can arrange a home for her in that strange wild city of ours."

"I do not give my approval," said the Colonel. "But as for permission, sir—my ranch, sir, as anything else of value to my friends, is, sir, at your disposal!"

"I feel that it is far from an ideal arrangement, Colonel. But it is one that leaves me without the least fear for my daughter's safety."

Nevinson was a man of impulse. His hatreds were sudden, and sometimes he forgave unexpectedly. His affections did not hesitate and critically examine a woman as if he were buying a horse. When he disliked, he showed anger; when he liked, he yielded readily. He was a man of the world, and the code of his day and caste permitted a gentleman to have as many affairs with women of pleasure as was pleasing; but he would no more have thought of marrying such a woman than of marrying a negress.

Ilona, in his eyes, was beautiful; her father was a gentleman; and in spite of that episode at the gambling table, he was ready to believe that she was all that he implied when he called a woman a "refined lady." So, in coming from the city to the ranch, he had passed from a gallant readiness to do a beautiful young woman a favor into an uneasy solicitation for the welfare of the woman he was really beginning to think of marrying.

THE next morning he spoke with Ferdinand alone.

"Look here, sir. If you let any harm come to her, you'll have to answer to me, to me, sir!"

"Ho, my colonel, if harm comes to her, Ferdinand will be already in hell!"

"What, sir, do you mean by that?" demanded the Colonel who did not readily understand the roundabout speech of romantic people.

"That God who is good will not have me die till a better man follows her leetle feet. An' as Ferdinand is as good as the bes', he will live a long long time an' tell merry tales to the children she shall bring into this beeg bad world."

"No impudence, Ferdinand. More respect when you talk of a lady, sir!"

Ferdinand regarded him blankly, wholly unsuspecting that there were gentlemen so high-minded, whatever their vices, as to think it indecorous to speak of unborn children.

"Now Ferdinand," said the colonel a little awkwardly though he gave his mustache an upward pull, and was always quite uncomfortable when trying to speak otherwise than bluntly, "if Miss Elvira should misunderstand—"

"Hi-oh-o, my Colonel, I knew queeker than a bird winks why you pulled the long face to see that Ferdinand was not to the mine-camps. But now what sleep do he get, this Ferdinand, with the thought of how the good Dona, God be good to her! will talk to learn that Ferdinand, her own man, who would keel, if she was wicked an' wanted men keeled—who would keel an' die for her, maybe—now loves to the death a woman that has so much beauty even my colonel, who is no blin' man, has his eyes dazzle? Ho-oh-o, my Colonel, the good Donna will be full of ten devils an' the colonel's ears will buzz as if bees hived there! But poor Ferdinand—e-ah! Ho, well, I leave it to God who knows all things! But if my colonel does not say where she is, this leetle one, Ferdinand will not say *how* she come; an' the good Dona rides this way so leetle that she has been to El Crucifijo but one time. Then there were so many fleas in the blanket that she swore with oaths beeg as your own, my Colonel, that she would nevare, nevare, come again. So you see how God does plan all things!"

That morning the colonel called for the

beautiful horse that he had named Prince, and which, without thought or inkling of the storm that gathered because of this horse, he believed that he had bought fairly enough, since he left in the Spaniard's hands, or rather at his feet, as much gold as the horse was worth.

This was Sunday morning. Ilona and the colonel rode together, Ilona upon Prince.

She rather liked Col. Nevinson. His abruptness, his tense directness of speech, interested her in a way that mannerly smoothness would not have done.

They galloped over the smooth ground, and from time to time drew rein under an oak or on a round hilltop. He told her with vivid abruptness of what he had seen at the mines and elsewhere, all of which he did in his best manner, and quite consciously hoping to touch her affections. Her liking for him increased, but she no more suspected, or responded, to the tender purpose that he had in mind than she would have responded had he attempted a caress. She would have struck him and hated him.

Col. Nevinson and Mr. Tesla, having already stayed longer than they had thought they would remain away from the city where any hour, or any moment for that matter, business might go with topsy-turvy whirling either up or down, or some dramatic excitement affect the affairs of the city, left the *rancho* on Sunday afternoon so that with brisk riding they could reach the city before dark.

El Crucifijo lay two or three miles off the main travelled road, which at this time was not itself much travelled.

They had not gone far on this road when they met two Spanish Californians. Col. Nevinson swore hotly under his breath as he recognized one of them as Don José.

Col. Nevinson had just been saying, in the formal speech that gentlemen of that day regarded as essential when the subject was of such delicacy and importance.

"Sir, with your permission, sir, I would like to make known to Miss Tesla, sir, as I now make known to you, sir, the high esteem I have conceived for her, brief as has been, sir, our acquaintance. I am, sir, a man of my word. Rash toward my enemies, sir, but I have never failed a friend. I would feel it, sir, a great honor to have your approbation in paying my court to Miss Tesla, whom I regard, sir, as the most charming and refined lady—"

His scrutiny of the on-coming Spaniards forced him to break off.

A Californian, it has been said, would greet politely his deadliest enemy if they met as travellers on the road; and Don José, after a studied glance at Nevinson, spoke to Mr. Tesla and rode on, while the more companionable Benito, who knew no word of any tongue but his own, cried a lusty, "*Buenas tardes, señores,*" and touched his hat.

Col. Nevinson reined up and stared after them, and there was a kind of wrathful uneasiness in his manner.

"Let them go, Colonel," said Mr. Tesla, a little anxiously. "Why do you watch them so?"

"Um! No reason, sir, except that two such rascals need close watching. I am half-minded, sir, to return to the ranch."

"Why, this is the main road, Colonel. They are not going there."

"I hope not, sir. —— and fire, sir, if —"

He did not say more. He, being a good judge of horseflesh, had noticed in a glance that the horses these men rode bore the same brand as that upon the one he called Prince.

"After all, what of it?" he reflected. "There were no doubt hundreds of horses in this part of the country with that same brand. These men were using a highway. They wouldn't, of course, go to *El Crucifijo.*"

And that afternoon Don José, in spite of Benito's urging, did ride on without turning off toward *El Crucifijo.*

ILONA, with laughter to hide loneliness, for partings were rare between them, and many lingering kisses, had given her father God's speed, and to Col. Nevinson many merry words and a hand-clasp that he thought tender.

Ferdinand bid them good-by with great flourishes and "Hi-oh-o's!" Kredra was not in sight.

When they had gone, Ilona found her in the house, in a dark corner, crouched and crying.

"Kredra, beloved! Kredra, what is it?"

"I do not know. I do not know, little one!"

"You do not know! Why, silly Kredra, why then do you cry? Have you turned baby and wail to strengthen your lungs!"

"Ah little one, blessed little one, do not jest with Kredra. For it is here—" she beat her breast—"it is here, the Black Ache—it is greater than pain—I can not tell why—I do not know—but it has come—the Black Ache! I fear for you, for you! For *you!*"

She clutched Ilona and pulled her near, held her as if holding her from Death itself. At times, but only rarely, an ominous and desperate sensation would seem to gather near Kredra's heart in a way that almost overpowered her. She had grown to believe implicitly that this was a warning, for after experiencing such periods of depression she had always been able soon to name some unfortunate event of which the Black Ache, as she called it, had been meant as a warning. Kredra, though she loved God, and was a good Catholic, was also a Basque; and her mother had been a woman who among her people had the name of one who knew the future. But Kredra knew only that at times strange and unintelligible sensations came upom her; and now she felt a great fear, of she knew not what, and she expressively called it the Black Ache.

Ferdinand too had suddenly lost his merriment. When the horsemen were beyond reach of his cheery shouts, he glanced upward to see the sun. That was his way of noting time. Then he threw back his head, gaping upward, and lifting a hand in a gesture of astonishment, the better to make sure of his count, cried:

"One — two — three — four — five — God warns a man! Seven ravens and they fly northward! That is death!"

XXIV

IT WAS late in the afternoon when Col. Nevinson and Mr. Tesla rode into the city. On the way they had been stopped by men who told them the news, of the excitement among the Hounds, of the shambles in the Magnolia, that Bruce Brace was dead, shot in the back by the Greaser, José de Sola, as Brace quarreled with Dick Hales.

The streets, as usual, swarmed with men, moving toward drinking halls, standing in groups, shifting about from foot to foot with lurching swagger; men, rough, full of health, many of them nearly full of whisky. Some recognized Col. Nevinson as he rode by and they shouted to him. He returned their greetings with preoccupied tenseness. Loud talk echoed through the streets. "Greasers" was a word frequently lifted by an oath above the heads of the crowd. Once Mr. Tesla caught the sentence: "—Hounds been giving' 'em —— all afternoon—" Something that vibrated the senses that warn one of danger, something like the palpable but intangible coming of storm, was in the air. Even sober men were restless, uneasy, without knowing why.

That afternoon the Hounds had scattered into gangs, entered restaurants, eaten heartily, and, with a new audacity in a practise that was not entirely new, overturned tables and smashed dishes as a protest against such unreason as being expected to pay for what they had eaten and drunk. They were, they said, guardians of the city. Parties of them had moved off toward the Spanish quarter where they paraded about, shouting threats, running stray Chileans into their tents, hurling bottles and rocks with a sort of aimless, half-merry riotousness; but they adjourned frequently to wherever they could get something to drink.

Mr. Tesla hurried anxiously to the Magnolia. The saloon was filled. The orchestra played. The tables were banked deep with men, offering their alms to the hag, Fortune. Men stood three deep at the bar, shouting over one another's shoulders at bartenders who hurried with a kind of blank, automatic, yet unfailing swiftness, clapping down bottles, mixing drinks, slinging glasses with deft accuracy, remembering a volley of orders.

Mr. Cronin's chubby body radiated satisfaction. A big cigar was between his lips, and looked very much like a peg on which he was trying to hang himself by the mouth.

"Ah," he said happily to Mr. Tesla, "it was good for the business! I thought we would be ruint, but such a town! It has brought men like flies. I do not care if somebody he is killed ever' hour. So much business—oo-ey!"

"You," said Mr. Tesla angrily, "you—I am amazed at you, Cronin!"

"At me? For why? Because business it is good! What a feller you are, Tesla. I suppose you would feel better if the house

was empty and little spiders they hung themselves across the door! The syndicate would think you a good man then to invest for them money—yes?"

"There must be no more murders in this house, Cronin!"

"How'll you stop 'em, eh? Tell me that! *Boom—boom!* Just like that, and it is over before you know it was about to begin. I don't like it neither I can tell you! I cracked my knee gettin' out of the way yesterday when that Hales feller started to shoot. Bullets make too much noise! But see for yourself, Tesla—business it is good!"

"—— such business!" said Mr. Tesla, who was not a profane man and rarely let go of his temper.

He was used to the gambling salons of European cities, among people who, whatever their follies, had grace of manner. He was exasperated, disgusted, by this mob-like fierceness for drink and play of men, bearded like ruffians; of sinister scrawny dudish men, of merchants and sailors, of wharf workmen, even of bankers, of odd foreign little fellows. "Good business." The air was filled with oaths, blasphemous as evil could suggest; there was the stench of sweating bodies, bad breath, stale tobacco, spilled liquors.

"Ugh!" he said, and walked rapidly, aimlessly, away from Mr. Cronin.

COL. NEVINSON, as if throwing himself off, jumped from his horse and entered Baer's saloon. This too was packed with men, many Hounds, hangers-on of the city politicians, some officials of the city.

Men made way for him with an eager respect, and many talked together at the same time, crying—

"We've needed you, Colonel!"—"You ort've been here, Colonel!"—"Thought you'd never come!"—"Now, greasers, look out! The Colonel's come!"

"Whisky," said Col. Nevinson. "And for everybody!"

"Hurray for the colonel!"

"They shot Bruce Brace in the back, Colonel. He never had a chanct!"

"An' Jerry too. 'Fore he had his gun out!"

"An' Tim White, Colonel!"

"Billy Wall was tryin' to run—the greaser got 'im!"

"Some o' the boys are down to the Spanish town now, Colonel, tellin' the greasers to git to —— out o' the country!"

"That greaser José, he lit out a'ready!"

"I seen Hales 's afternoon talkin' to ol' Deering front of the postorffice!"

"I seen him 'bout an hour ago, Colonel, in the Magnolier. An' he was lookin' purty scairt, he was!"

"Tell us what to do, Colonel! Tell us what we're goin' to do?"

"Are we, sir," cried Col. Nevinson, "to allow the —— greasers to run this country! Are we to let them shoot down—"

A score of hot "No's!" went up and were repeated wrathfully.

"Then, sir," Col. Nevinson began, pausing to glare about him. "Then, sir—" But he was interrupted by a hand on his arm that familiarly pulled at him.

"Just a minute, Colonel. I've got to tell—"

Nevinson turned with angry impatience; but the man was Baer himself, politician, business man, friend.

"What is it, Baer? Be quick about it, and don't try to interfere with what I'm going to say."

Baer was a stodgy man, not easily ruffled nor excitable; and now the look in his eyes was full of meaning.

"Jim Tucks he just got down from Stockton on this morning's boat. He's bad off and 's got to see you."

"He can wait, Baer. He can wait. I have business here to—"

"Now listen, Colonel—" Baer dropped his voice—"I promised him I'd have you come first thing. You'd better go. Somethin' happened to Tucks. He come from the mines to see you. You'd better go. I put him upstairs in my room. He's up there now. You'd better go."

There was a furtive and imperative steadiness in the oblique slant of Baer's heavy eyes.

"What is it, sir? ——, sir, what's the matter, Baer?"

"I ain't sayin'." Baer slowly shook his head. "But you'd better go."

Col. Nevinson, moved as if by a warning from one whom he trusted, pushed his way through the crowd into the back of the saloon, passed out of the back door, and ascended a stairway that rose from the alley to the room above.

He entered abruptly, without knocking, and strode into the room, demanding—

"Tucks?"

"E-anh," said a voice, answering slowly, like a growl expressive of pain and some resentment, and a big coatless man who was sitting slumped forward in a chair arose slowly. His back was bowed, and he moved with a slow stiffness, as if guarding against a movement that would bring pain.

He was of the type known as raw-boned, strong, used to hardship, with high cheeks, long nose, bearded. His eyes fixed on Nevinson in a sullen stare.

"What the ——'s the matter with you? Sick?"

"E-anh. Sick all right. Disease that's goin' to be —— catchin', too. Ouch!"

He flinched with a writhing motion.

"What's the matter with you!"

"E-anh." Tucks held out his arms. "Help me off with this blasted shirt an' —"

"Shirt? ——and-fire, sir, are you crazy!"

"You do as I tell ye!" Tucks snarled. "You 'll learn —— quick—"

The shirt was unbuttoned in front. With groans and winces the sleeves were pulled off his arms, and cautiously, with curses as he did so, for there was pain, he dropped the shirt from his shoulders, and with awkward shuffling turned about, turning his back for the colonel to see.

Nevinson stared, and opened his mouth, and closed it, silently. He peered forward, and drew back quickly, staring.

"E'ow 'd you like that!" Tucks snarled half facing about. "You 'll get it too! They 're goin' to give it to all us that whipped that greaser that day—though Baer tells me Bruce Brace is dead, —— him! 'T was him that put you up to it. Know what it is, don't ye?"

"But my ——, Tucks—how—"

Col. Nevinson broke off into curses, threatening wrath upon whoever had branded his man and friend over the whole of his back with a rude circle and ruder cross.

"E-anh cussin' won't do no good. They'll get y', they'll get *you* too if you don't get to —— out of this blankety-blank-blanked-blank-*blank* Californy!"

"—— their yellow hides and hearts! Do you know who did it, Tucks?"

"I reckon I do," he snarled. "I'd just been up to have a look at our supplies in Sonora, an' was ridin' down to Knight's Ferry. I saw 'em comin'—four of 'em. I didn't think nothin'—not till I reckernized that greaser we whipped that day. I didn't know whether to draw my gun an' run f'r it, or to take the chanct he didn't know me. I took the chanct. When I saw he knowed me I pulled a gun, but 't wasn't no use. One o' them ropes o' theirs come through the air an' pinned my arms tight, an' jerked me clean out o' the saddle. They took me 'bout a mile off the road, pegged me out, built 'em a fire, an'—you see what they done!"

"Tucks, I swear I'll kill every —— greaser that touched you! The ——!—"

"Aw ——, don't cuss so much. I've cussed an' cussed. They tried to make me tell who the other men was that was with us that day, an' where they'd find 'em. They'd a killed me if I hadn't told 'em something."

"You told!"

"What if I did!" Tucks cried savage with disgrace and pain. "You'd tell somethin' too, wouldn't y', if they used your skin to write on with hot iron? But no, I didn't tell 'em. I give 'em some name o' nobody I ever heard of in a camp on the Stanislaus. Then I come to Stockton an' on down here. I ain't told nobody but Baer."

"Why didn't you tell the miners! Why didn't you raise the country, sir! Hunt them down like dogs! By ——, sir, I'll tell—"

"Not about *my* back you won't! You can wait an' tell about y'r own. I don't want folks to know I been branded by *greasers*. I'm goin' to get out o' this country. They said if they ever met me again they'd kill me, an' they sure as —— will! I want y' to buy out my share in the company. We 're losin' money like —— anyhow. I'm done!"

"But Tucks, —— you, be a man! I'll put up a reward for them—I'll hire men. By ——, sir, I'll have them hunted down an' hanged quicker—"

"Aw right, do it. I don't care. Hope you do. But I'm goin' home. —— Californy! An' 'cause you 've al'us been square with me, I come down here to tell y'. You'd better get out too. They 'll git y', they 'll git *you* too."

"Leave because of greasers!" cried Col. Nevinson. "Never! Never, sir! By ——, never! ——-and-fire, sir, I'll never turn my back to any man, much less to—"

"You will if they git y' an' peg y' out like they done me. You 'll turn y'r back to 'em

—an' yell too, like I done. Ow —— Californy, an' all the gold in it! The greasers 've been gettin' that too. Miners been runnin' 'em out o' some of the camps, an' they're robbin' miners right an' left. Can't no more catch 'em than y' can catch fleas in a brush pile. They're takin' the whole —— country—"

Drunken shouts from the barroom below reached them. With startled erectness, as if suddenly recalling something important, Col. Nevinson cried—

"You wait here. I'll be back in five minutes. The greasers have got to go and they start tonight!"

"E-anh?" said Tucks, bowed, with head out-thrust, his shirt dangling about his thighs. He stood and stared, puzzled, indignant, full of pain; the fire of the hot iron seemed still burning on his back.

COL. NEVINSON re-entered through the back door of the saloon. The hubbub of aimlessly angered voices, many loud with drunkenness, filled the air. With shove and push at this man and that, he forced his way to the bar. He said to those nearest—

"Help me up there!"

They helped him up. His voice cut through the hubbub like a shout through the aimless gusts of wind.

"Does Californy, sir, belong to Americans, or to these —— greasers? Answer me!"

"T'us! T'us 'Mericans!"—"Hey-'uray! To 'Mericans!"

"Are we going to let this city and this country be run and over-run, sir, by—"

"No!"—"no!"—"no!"—"no!"

"'Ray f'r the colonel!"

"Then drive them out, sir! Drive them out! By ——, *make* them go! Clean the city! Clean the country! You stand here drinking and talking like a lot of —— barnyard geese! Why do you call yourselves *regulators?* Get your men together, go down there and clean out every —— greaser in San Francisco. Then we'll start in on—"

Nothing more that he said was heard, and there was no need of saying more. Rocketing cheers went up. There was an excited calling back and forth; cries of "Line up!" "Fall in!" A scurrying of messengers through the city, bearing word to wherever Hounds could be found. A gathering of pistols and clubs. A swigging of bottles that passed back and forth from hand to hand as the Hounds stood in the street outside in something like a line, for theirs was, or was supposed to be, a semi-military organization. The commotion and shouting attracted people who asked—

"What's up?"

The answers were bold and to the point—

"We're going to drive out ever' greaser in the town!"

"We're 'Mericans! This here country b'longs to us, by ——!"

When something over a hundred of the Hounds had been assembled the order to march was, by dint of repetition, obeyed, and they marched away through the streets and under the eyes of men whose inactive curiosity, if not actual shout of encouragement, seemed to give sanction and authority to the Hounds and their purpose. They marched to the then remote quarter of the city where the numerous Spanish-speaking emigrants, mostly Chileans, lived in shacks and tents.

With a mob-like rush, yelling blasphemously and shooting wildly, they broke upon the settlement. Chilean men were struck down, beaten as they lay; women and children were thrown into the street; tents were torn down, all household goods and merchandise were destroyed or stolen; some Hounds mounted horses and ran Chileans through the town and up Telegraph Hill, firing as they pursued the "—— foreigners." All through the night the raiding and looting went on, with parties of Hounds moving to whatever section of the city a greaser's tent could be found.

There was no attempt to check this outrage, no protest from the citizens; there were no police; the Sheriff was himself a Hound. The Chileans did not fly to any Americans for sanctuary and tell of their wo, for they had no way of knowing that one American might be better than another. Rioting and brawling were so common in the city that many who heard it from afar thought it only a little more loud and persistent than usual; and the Hounds, having thoroughly cleaned the Chilean quarter, searched like the heroes that they were among the abandoned household effects for trinkets, jewelry and pawnable stuff.

XXV

THAT evening Judge Deering and Hales stood together in the Magnolia. Hales was saying—

"—and so I want to put the matter in your hands. I want her found and cared for. But I do not want to do the finding. Now that I have seen other women of the class into which she has fallen, I do not want to see her.

"I have told you of my experience with that Eton woman. She knows something, I think, but I don't want to go near her again.

"As I told you this afternoon, I'm going up to the mines, then into Sacramento, and join up with the Army for a time—"

Presently Judge Deering called a bearded man in miner's dress and introduced him to Hales as Wallace B. Kern.

"Formerly, sir, State Senator of New York, but now a worshipper of the Golden Calf, Mr. Hales. He is so proud of his idolatry that he wears the beard, the shirt, the trousers, the boots, in short, sir, the full dress and insignia of those benighted heathens who bow down to Gold!"

"All right, Judge, the drinks are on me," said Kern in good-natured embarrassment. "But I can tell you gentlemen one thing, the judge is right about us miners bowing down to gold. To worship gold you have to get right down with a curve in your back and dig in while you pray!"

Drinks in hand they all moved off to be free from the jostling of the crowd, and stood near a wall, not far from a small door that had recently been cut through the wall. Like the other doorways of the Magnolia, it had no door—was never closed.

Mr. Tesla came up and asked for a word aside with Hales. They stepped together a few feet from the wall.

"Mr. Hales, I am greatly distressed. As you must know, my feeling toward you is one of respect and admiration. But I greatly fear that there will be trouble between you and Col. Nevinson, who is also my friend."

"What now?" asked Hales.

"Somebody, sir, has made the colonel believe that you are his enemy. Has in fact intimated that you came to the city looking for him. He mentioned this to me again to-day."

"I never heard of him before I got here," said Hales. "Why should I have been looking for him?"

Mr. Tesla shook his head, with—

"I know nothing of that, Mr. Hales. I don't know why anybody should try to make trouble between you. But I fear it can be easily done, now. Bruce Brace was a close friend of Col. Nevinson's."

"And," asked Hales coldly, "do you think for a minute that Nevinson did not know of Brace's clever little trick for assassinating people?"

"Mr. Hales, I am sure that he did not know of it!"

"Unh," said Hales.

"Col. Nevinson is a rash and high tempered man; but, sir, I believe him utterly, *utterly* incapable of countenancing such a dastardly—"

Without the slightest warning a shot was fired, then another instantly afterward.

Excepting a few who chanced to be looking in the general direction of the small newly made doorway, no one saw anything; and these saw only two swift flashes in the darkness from beyond the vague glow that reached for a few feet through the doorway toward which Mr. Tesla was facing as he stood before Hales.

The first shot passed by them and struck some man beyond in the thigh; and at the sound of it, Hales wheeled aside, facing about, pulling at his gun. The second shot followed, and Hales fired at the flash, shooting rapidly, twice into the darkness. There was no answer, no outcry.

Hales, saying—"Who the —— could —," glanced backwards over his shoulder toward Mr. Tesla and saw him standing with an odd look of pained surprize, with no focus in his gaze and staring blankly, at nothing. One hand fumbled at his side, and the other with groping vagueness reached out for something to hold.

He said quietly, in a low tone of astonishment, half to himself as sometimes a man slipping into drunkenness speaks.

"I—I—I have been shot!"

Hales swore bitterly, glanced again at the doorway as if half-minded to rush out in pursuit of an unknown man through darkness, hopelessly. He turned quickly and supported Mr. Tesla, who moved unsteadily, astonished, about to fall.

"Tempeté! Tempeté!" he said with low pleading. There was a blind stare in his eyes. "I must see Tempeté!"

The crowd, with no more shots to dodge, surged forward, closing in. Voices burst into oaths and queries. Men struggled to get where they could peer at Tesla.

Wallace B. Kern, Judge Deering, another man or two, pushed at them, swore, urged them back, to make room; and among the hum and babble some sensible voice rose—

"Get a doctor—doctor!"

Mr. Cronin, puffing, distressed, excited until he did not know what he was saying or doing, got through the crowd and pawed at Tesla, crying—

"Ow Tesla! Tesla! Mr. Tesla are you hurt? —— this town! Such a fine man, an' they shoot him!"

Hales asked of Cronin—

"We'd better take him up there?"—pointing to the balcony.

"Is he dead? Is he dead? Ow Mr. Tesla, don't die!"

"Tempeté," Tesla murmured with singleness of thought, and by the pressure of his weight Hales knew that he was unconscious, or nearly so. "My daughter, please gentlemen—Tempeté," he begged, and his voice had almost the sound of one speaking out of a nightmare.

Kern and Hales and another man lifted Mr. Tesla and moved through the crowd, toward the balcony.

Judge Deering, towering massively, composed, laid a firm hand on Cronin's shoulder, held him and said—

"Mr. Tesla's daughter, sir. He asks for her. Where is she?"

"I don't know—I don't know," Cronin babbled, struggling to follow those who carried Mr. Tesla. "Let me go—what you mean, holdin' me!—I don't—she's at Cow-somethin' ranch—let me——"

"Sir," said Judge Deering with calm firmness, "she must be sent for, and at once. Where is this ranch? Who knows of it?"

Cronin blubbered excitedly rather than talked, and as he blubbered he pulled to get from under Judge Deering's hand.

"Let go—I don't know—Col. Nevinson took 'em — he knows — his ranch — Cow-something—ow let go me —"

The Judge turned loose the frantic little man, then with commanding composure asked of those pressed about him—

"Gentleman, is there any one here who knows of this ranch?"

There was a shaking of heads and vacant inquiring stares from one to another.

"Is there any one here who knows where Col. Nevinson may be found?"

To this question there were many answers, but most of them were guesses; some said most likely in one place, some another; then a man who overheard of what they were talking pushed in and said that the colonel was in Baer's saloon.

Judge Deering, unhurried of manner, with the deliberate and almost solemn bearing of one who could not be swerved aside from what he had determined upon, left the Magnolia, crossed the Plaza, and following a dark street by the light from saloons that faced upon it, came to Baer's saloon, entered and inquired for Col. Nevinson.

"Don't know where he is now," Judge. But he sure was here just before dark!"

"And his friend, Baer, sir?"

"Don't know where he is neither, Judge. Hey, Fred, know where the colonel 'r boss is?"

"They *was* here," answered the second bartender, "but I don't know now. Baer he didn't leave no word."

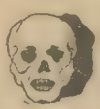
"Do either of you gentlemen, sir, know where Col. Nevinson's ranch lies?"

"Don't Judge. Sorry. Any word?"

"Yes. Yes. If the colonel returns, kindly ask him, sir, to come to the Magnolia— Thank you, sir," said Judge Deering, leaving the saloon.

At that moment Nevinson and Baer were in the room overhead. There had been too much excitement in the saloon for the bartenders to notice when they had gone; and as they now sat earnest and low-voiced, talking to Tucks, the bartenders had not heard anyone moving about overhead.

Judge Deering returned to the Magnolia and sent men about the city, making inquiries, and though word was left in many places for Col. Nevinson, no one found him.



IN THE balcony room Mr. Tesla lay on the bed, motionless, breathing slowly. Now and then he opened his eyes, but he noticed no one, saw nothing.

"He can't live," said the doctor.

Again and again Mr. Tesla murmuringly asked for his daughter.

When Kern had lifted the big shade, decorated with rosebuds and cherubs, so

that the doctor might have a better light, the shade slipped from his hands, and fell, with a clatter. At the sound of it, Mr. Tesla stirred anxiously, saying in a low confused tone—

"Mr. Hales—Colonel—gentlemen!—no—no—"

"That wasn't a shot, sir—just glass," said the doctor.

"Ah, thank God! Tempeté—Cowden's ranch—gentlemen, please bring her?"

Though the apartment was his own, Cronin had been put out of it.

"You make too much noise," said Kern. "Stay away from here."

When Judge Deering came, Kern said:

"He can't live—I don't think. He doesn't want Hales to leave. Seems afraid he and the colonel will meet. He wants his daughter. Where the —— is Cowden's ranch, Judge? She's there. Nobody seems to know."

"Cowden's ranch?" said the Judge thoughtfully. "I never heard of it, but if it has been known long by that name and is near San Francisco, I know how to find out. Some one must go and bring Miss Tesla."

"I'll go," said Hales. "You find out where it is. I'll go. But good ——, Judge, how am I going to let that girl know her father was hit by a bullet meant for me!"

"Now just *who* do you think could have done it?" asked Kern. "One of those Hounds? That bullet was certainly meant for your back!"

Hales shook his head and would not answer. A Hound, most likely. But he thought of the reproach that would be in the dark tawny eyes of that straight slender girl, who would feel that he had brought death upon her father.

XXVI

JUDGE DEERING, accompanied by Hales, left the balcony, passed unhurriedly through the crowd, crossed the Plaza and went to his quarters above the hardware store.

John Taylor, the Judge's new youthful partner, was there, bent over a book in the lamplight.

"John my boy, where is Mateo? Has he come in?"

"Si, señor, I am here," Mateo called from behind the curtain where he had his pallet. "This is no night for me to be out. The *sabuesos* are abroad—" as he spoke he came from between the curtains, bare footed, in drawers and shirt, blinking at the light. "Hounds they are, señor, an' smell blood. They drink an' curse an' say——"

"Mateo, do you know Cowden's ranch, where it lies?"

"Si, señor, I know what Americanos call the Cowden's Rancho. It is not Cowden's Rancho, señor. It is Gaspar de Coronal's *rancho, El Crucifijo*, though señor Cowden by marriage—"

"No chronicle of Spanish families tonight, Mateo. Some other time. But Mr. Tesla of the Magnolia has been shot and is dying. His daughter is at this ranch, and must be brought. You will ride with Mr. Hales and show the way—"

Hales, after a glance at Mateo, had looked steadily at young Taylor, recalling that he had seen him on the waterfront when the big mirror was being landed; recalling too the impression that he had felt in the first glance at the young man's features.

As Judge Deering pronounced the name Hales, young Taylor turned with a start, looking intently, asking with amazed doubt—

"Your name is *Hales?*"

"Yes. And you are—" Hales finished with a nod, stepped forward, put out his hand.

"You are Dick Hales!" the boy cried eagerly. "Why I thought you were at the other end of California! How wonderful it is to find *you!*"

"It has been ten years, or more," said Hales with a kind of grave affection, with kindness, but no eagerness. "You were a very small boy, then."

"And Mr. Tesla has been killed, you say?" asked Taylor, confused with pleasure at having thus met with Dick Hales, distressed at hearing about Mr. Tesla. "I knew him well; and Miss Tesla. We came on the same ship!"

"Then you had better come too," said Hales. "We can talk as we ride. And it will be better for a friend to break to her such news as we bring."

Taylor looked about for his hat. Hales stepped close to Judge Deering and said quickly in a low voice—

"Good ——, sir, that is her brother! Brother of the woman I told you of!"

Judge Deering almost gasped, and his was a composure not easily startled. He took hold of Hales' arm and would have asked questions; but Taylor, hat in hand, turned to them, asking—

"Who shot Mr. Tesla?"

"No one knows, my boy," said Judge Deering. "No one knows—now. But hide it as you will, sir, evil will out! And as long as there is a God in Heaven there will be punishment of evil men upon this earth. And now you my friends must go quickly and ride hard—ride hard, for the majesty of Death, sir, does not wait upon the going and coming of men."

IN THE balcony apartment of the Magnolia two or three men sat or stood about with little to say, waiting. Now and then the doctor went down and had a drink, and told those who gathered about him that Tesla might live, after all; that he did not appear to be suffering. Wallace B. Kern, who had seen a man or two die, thought that Tesla did suffer. At times his moans were heard, but at such times he seemed nearly unconscious.

Now and then Kern, booted and in red shirt, restlessly dropped on the divan, lay for a moment, got up, wandered about, would go to the window and peer down. The doctor and the other man or two who had helped bring Tesla were now talking and drinking at the bar.

The Magnolia was well filled with men. Cronin had been right. Shooting affairs did draw crowds, for as the hour grew late, men stayed on. The lookouts droned indifferently, "Make your game, gentlemen—the game is made, gentlemen, the game is made." The cards fell before eager faces and staring eyes. Over the new roulette wheel the little ball spun with a flickering clickety-click, chasing round and round to find the number and color decreed by that impenetrable law which rules all chance. Bartenders flung their drinks with a long parabolic curve from the mixing cup to glass, and spilled not a drop. Men bunched together, talking, guessing how this or that might have a bearing on the mystery of who had fired through the doorway; names were hinted at; the name of the gambler, Dawes, was openly mentioned, talked of, repeated.

Mr. Tesla was stirring. Kern strode across the room and bent low, but could not understand. Tesla spoke with the broken effort of one who could hardly speak at all. The words were so low, slurred, so nearly at times inarticulate, that Kern could only now and then understand. He was asking for his daughter, asking anxiously what would become of her. Kern spoke to him; but Tesla could not hear, his eyes were open and staring, but he saw nothing.

"—California—oh this California!"

His voice ceased. Kern bent forward anxiously. Mr. Tesla had again become unconscious.

Kern, alone, was sitting with his head between his hands, staring at the floor, when the door opened. He did not look up until he rose with a start clear to his feet at the sound of Col. Nevinson's voice—

"Name of God, sir! Who shot Tesla?"

The colonel's face was pale. He strode to the bed. His sharp tone was for the moment gone, his voice nearly broke as he said—

"Tesla? Tesla? My God, Tesla!" Then toward Kern, almost humbly, "Is he dead!"

"I don't think so," said Kern, drawing near, and together they bent over the unconscious body.

"Where's the doctor? ——-and-fire, sir, why isn't there a doctor!"

"There is. He went down for a drink."

"Drink! —— him, and let a man die! I'll bring him up here. I'll—"

Nevinson strode to a window of the balcony. His right arm still lay in its sling of black silk. With his left hand he drew his gun, and beating savagely at the glass sent it in a shower of fragments about the heads of startled men at the monte table, just below. Then through the opening that he had made, Nevinson shouted clear across the Magnolia to the bar—

"Tell that —— doctor to get up here and get up here quick, or I'll be down there after him!"

The doctor came, red of face and angered, but he came, anxiously.

All the doctors in the world, or none—it would have been the same. The majesty of Death, who waits not upon the going and coming of men, had touched Franz Tesla, and he lay as if in a worried sleep, still anxious over the welfare of one whom he loved.

XXVII

HALES, Mateo, and young John Taylor rode hard. Mateo, like all native Californians, men or women, sat a horse as if he had grown to the saddle. Most Californians did get a large part of their growth out of the saddle, which they used nearly as much as they used a bed.

As Mateo rode he chattered with a kind of gossipy merriment to Hales, for Mateo knew all about all the old Spanish families in that part of the country. El Crucifijo, he said, did not belong to the man Cowden; it belonged to Gaspar de Coronal, whose daughter Señor Cowden had married. Señor Cowden had bought some land *near* the rancho which he used as his own because of the marriage; but El Crucifijo belonged to —and so, on and on, with the rattling repetition of a woman. Mateo thought it a thing to be laughed at merrily if this colonel had bought Señor Cowden's few acres in the belief that he was getting historic El Crucifijo.

The night was overhung with half a moon, dotted with all the stars, the landscape covered with soft light and heavy shadows.

As they pounded into the curve of road that circled embracingly before the ranch house of El Crucifijo, a broad-chested figure emerged into the moonlight; and as they pulled down, his deep low-spoken voice, with every appearance of anxious warning, cried in Spanish—

"On, on señors! Ride for your lives! The blasted gringos lie near here and wait!"

"We fly from no man, señor!" said Mateo. "We bring news!"

"Eh?" said Ferdinand, with shake of head, clutching at the bridle of Taylor's horse, peering up into his face. "You are yourself an American?"—this in English. Ferdinand had wasted his good lie with which he had meant to keep unwelcome friends, who might want to pause and rest, on their way.

"Where is Miss Tesla?" Hales demanded.

"Who are you, señor? An' why is it you ask for her?" he questioned, suspiciously.

"Mr. Tesla has been shot and is dying."

"Eh, señor!" Ferdinand peered up searchingly. "E-ah! I beleeve you, señor, but say to me it is not so! In God's name, lie to me, señor! He dies?"

"He is dying and wants his daughter. This man—" Hales gestured at Mateo—"showed the way. This boy"—he indicated Taylor—"is a friend she knows. There is no time to lose."

"An' who, who, señor?" asked Ferdinand with a kind of stealthy menace in his voice, "Who keeled the father of my people's daughter?"

"It is not known. We lose time. Go tell her."

"There is always time for sorrow, señor, lose what you may of it. An' you say it is not known—how not known?"

"He was shot from the dark. Awaken Miss Tesla, say —"

"Not known? From the dark?" Ferdinand repeated blankly, as if such things could not be. "Then our good God makes me the knife blade!" With rising savagery —"Ferdinand will know—e-ah! though he mus' deeg into hell an' read names of all who have keeled good men! E-ah! I will swear it —an' death upon heem!"

He raised his two hands and faced toward the moon; without lowering his eyes and speaking a most strange gibberish, he drew his knife, holding it aloft. All the superstition and criss-cross lore of his youth had, with the coming of Kredra, swept back upon him; and now with sudden passion he took the sacred oath of Steel and Moon that binds a man, irrevocably.

Mateo, seeing, hearing, understanding nothing except such as was responsive in his own superstitious blood, reined back his horse, putting more distance between himself and this strange man who took a knife-oath. John Taylor, understanding even less than Mateo, felt a troop of chills running up and down his back. And for the moment even Hales, though impatient as a man must be who has ridden hard with a message, kept silent, listened in puzzlement, wondering what tongue this man who seemed a Spaniard spoke.

FERDINAND, with lighted candle in hand, pushed aside the tanned bullock hide that hung before the doorway of a room and said softly—

"Kredra? Kredra the Wise, do you sleep?"

"I do not sleep," she answered wearily.

He entered, cupping the flame with his hand against the air current of the moving hide, and coming to the bed where she lay

motionless, her deep black eyes without fear, without curiosity, gazing fixedly at him, he said quietly—

"Within the time that a leaf falls from twig to earth, I have taken the Oath!"

"What oath?"

"Of Knife and Moon. A man dies!"

"Who?" said Kredra, rising quickly to her elbow.

"I do not know. But a man has come—"

"I heard the hoofbeats."

"—no lies are written on his face. He says the father of our little one dies. She must go!"

Kredra sat upright, glowering darkly—"*Who?*"

"He killed from the dark. But he dies. I have sworn!"

"E-ah! E-ah!" she cried, beating her breast. "The warning came! It was here—here within me and I did not know!"

"God loves us! I too read the warning by flight of birds!"

"Almost I see—almost—now—" Her eyes were closed, her fingers fumbled in the air just before her face as if trying to grasp the tenuous sensation of clairvoyance that trembled through her.

Ferdinand, candle by his face, watched her with the hovering intentness of one who watches mysteries.

These two strange people of a strange blood that had emerged from the racially unknown thousands of years before, of a people that, defeated but never conquered, had for generation upon generation hugged the birth-soil of the Pyrenees, were touched with elemental fears and faiths almost as ancient as the Aryan camp-fires from which the races of the world took their departure before history found a tongue. Some among them had, or made others believe that they had, the gift of hidden knowledge; Kredra had believed this of her mother, and believed too that within herself there was the confused shadow of this gift.

"Almost I know—it is near—but—but it does not come! Oh that my mother lived in me! She knew such things as God does not want hid. Ah—it is gone! The shadow of it was upon me—almost I knew, but it is gone!"

Ferdinand gave a great-chested sigh; then, gently—

"Up, Kredra the Wise. You must tell her as softly as the voice can speak."

Then he stuck the lighted candle in a niche made for a saint, and went out, with a hurried sweep of hand pushing aside the bullock hide.

With candle in hand, Kredra came to the broad bed where Ilona lay on her side, her hands clasped under her cheek; now a woman, ripe for a man's love, but lying and looking as Kredra had seen her a thousand times when a little child, and the sleepless Basque often through the night had come softly to see whether the covers were drawn, and the motherless little one slept well.

Kredra spoke. Ilona opened her eyes, but did not stir except that a drowsy smile half curled along her lips.

"Arise, little one. Rise and dress."

"Ump-nn," Ilona answered with deepened smile, closing her eyes and moving her head slightly in protest. "I'm asleep. Go 'way. I hate you."

"A horseman has come. Your father sends. You must go."

"My father!" Ilona pushed off the covers with a flurry of movement and sat up. Her hair fell about her in a tangle of caresses, her eyes glowed with alarm.

"Why? Kredra, *why* does my father send at this hour! It is night!"

"When God has done a thing, one should not lie," said Kredra, adding simply—"He dies."

"He dies?" Ilona cried, merely blankly repeating the words she could not believe. "My father—*dies?* Kredra, oh waken me! I dream that you say—Kredra, O Kredra, who—*who* would hurt my father? Oh—oh!"

She put her hands to her face and fell against Kredra, who pressed her tenderly, but said—

"Up, Life of my Life, dress and do not cry."

"But Kredra, how? My father—who? Oh Kredra!" Ilona clutched at her: "Oh who—*who* would hurt my father?"

"It is known to God! Do not weep. He had heard the Oath of the Knife. Come. We go now."

"My *father*—oh that city! Barbarians—ruffians—murderers— My father, Kredra—my father of all good men!"

Little Pedro, finding himself not called Don Turnip, nor pinched by the ear, grew anxious over what was wrong when roused to help catch and saddle horses. There were horses in the corral, but the one called Prince, because Ferdinand loved him well,

was feeding abroad with hair woven hobbles on his forelegs that he might be fat and happy for Ilona to ride about the ranch. And though a horse with hobbles cannot go far, he can go too far to be searched out in the moonlight when men hurry for mounts.

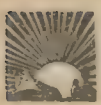
Ilona and Kredra waited near the mooncast shadow of El Crucifijo itself, and Ilona stood by young John Taylor, and looked at Hales with all the reproachfulness that he had dreaded.

Then Pedro, clucking and swearing as he pulled at the reins, and Ferdinand, silent, came with the horses.

"I come home again, soon, Friend Pedro." said Ferdinand as a word of parting. "Greet all men as friends until I return. Tell them nothing that is not true, and keep silent about the rest!"

They mounted and rode off. Pedro, mystified, watched them go; they went rapidly, and their misty outline soon passed from view in the night-light; for a time the muffled clatter of many hoofs was heard though no one was seen, then nothing was heard or seen.

XXVIII



HALES and Mateo, riding at the gait Ilona set, kept by her side and left the others on the road. They thundered through the city with reckless regard for anybody that might be in the way of the horses in those dark streets and brought up the panting horses at the rear of the Magnolia.

Ilona jumped from her horse at the foot of the stairs that led up to the balcony, and ran up them. She threw the door wide and with a rush entered.

No one was there. Only the dead waited for its own. There was scattered colored glass on the floor, cigar stubs and ash, a basin with wet red cloths hanging over the side was on the table; a lamp, nearly without oil, glowed dimly. From the Magnolia below came the hum of voices; men played, gambling and drinking. No one had kept company with the lonely dead.

Mr. Tesla lay as he had died, face up; his aristocratic face thinned, chilled, icy, bloodless, with the waxen emptiness that remains to flesh after Death has taken away that which Death feeds upon.

Ilona stood motionless for a moment, looking with startled agony. Her own death would have had in it less pain. She murmured with sad reproachfulness, "Father—oh my father!" Then by the bedside she sank to the floor, head bowed, hands writhingly clasped, and in an attitude of prayer, wept.

Hales had followed with light step, respectfully, sombrero in hand, and stood in the helpless embarrassment of one who feels deeply, but does not know what to say or do.

He glanced down into the Magnolia where men still clustered in groups about the gamblers' tables, where they were bunched, glasses in hand or at the elbow, by the bar. Among those there he recognized Col. Nevinson.

In a way, she was under this Colonel's protection; he had been her father's friend and partner. Hales hesitated, then went down into the Magnolia, to the bar, directly up to Nevinson, who eyed him with sharp appraisal. Men who knew both of them edged back a little anxiously.

"Miss Tesla has come," said Hales, just that, nothing more.

"Thank you, sir," said Col. Nevinson, with no friendliness, but unaggressive, and he made a slight movement toward turning at once and going to her, then paused. His glance met Hales' in a level stare. Abruptly Col. Nevinson pointed behind the bar, to a buckskin pouch resting on the bottom of inverted glasses.

"There, sir! There is one thousand dollars, gold! Who names me the name of the man that shot Tesla—it is his, sir!"

Hales answered—

"You know, of course, that the bullet that killed him was meant for me."

"That, sir, is *your* affair! Tesla was *my* friend!"

"So was Bruce Brace!"

With oath on oath, Col. Nevinson reached for his gun; instinctively he jerked for it with his right hand, but he carried this hand in a sling, and the sling checked the motion.

Hales felt a slight sensation of amazement that one who drew his arms so, almost, inexpertly should have such incredible rashness. With a movement too rapid for the eye to follow anything but the blur of motion, Hales had lifted his gun from its holster, muzzle-on at the hip. Nevinson's hands were still empty; they remained empty, for not even he would try to draw against a gun when he looked into its

mouth. For many moments no one moved. The very onlookers hung with breathless gaping, too-intent to dodge away. Not a word was said. Hales slowly returned the gun to its holster. They stared, each at the other, for a few tense seconds; then Hales turned and walked away, out of the front door, leaving the Magnolia.

Had he shot, Nevinson might have forgiven him; but this was unforgivable.

FERDINAND and Kredra came; and Kredra, after a long stare in silence at the dead man, drew a cover over the body, and going to Ilona enfolded her as if she were once again a child.

"A word with you, Ferdinand," said Col. Nevinson, and they drew aside. "For the present, I believe Miss Tesla had best return to the ranch. And as a mark of respect, sir, I shall have the body conveyed to the ranch for burial. Now, sir, I know something of your indebtedness to Miss Eton. I want to know how far I can depend upon your devotion to Miss Tesla?"

"That question," said Ferdinand softly, with eyes so nearly closed that nothing could be seen but a glint, "is one I ask of you, too?"

"What! What, sir! The impudence of—"

"Oh-o-oh! Don't wow-ow-row like that to Ferdinand, my Colonel. An' do not forget the good Dona, my Colonel. More devils sleep in her than in ten women, an' ever' woman she mus' have two devils at leas'—one when she hate an' one when she love. Ah-ah, my Colonel, if she hear of the leetle one, look out queek! The good Dona nevare forgives."

"I, sir, can look after my affairs without your advice," said Col. Nevinson, and would have strode away, but Ferdinand checked him, and pointed backward toward the bed.

"Who? Who deed it?"

"It is not known. It is not known, Ferdinand." His voice was almost friendly. "Some say it was the gambler, Dawes. They guess, mere guesses. I can't believe that of Dawes. No sir. But if I thought —by ——, sir, Dawes or devil, I would hold him to answer!"

Ferdinand gestured to Kredra when the Colonel had walked away, and Kredra came. He whispered low—

"I know the name of a man. I will go ask questions till I find him. I will say to him, 'Did you?' As he looks then, I can tell. If you do not see me again here, know that the Oath is done and I have gone back to the *rancho* and wait."

"Who?"

"One gambler man, Dawez."

Kredra caught his arm, and the pressure of her fingers almost bruised his powerful muscles.

"It *is* the man! Woe upon me that I saw death in his face! I saw, but I could not read! Evil-faced one! And look, you will see the shadow-trace of some man's knife that passed from here to here!" She drew her finger across her temple from the tip of eyebrow to hair. "I now know. He is the man!" she repeated with the calmness of one who is sure of her knowledge, and her deep black eyes were set in the far-off stare of a seer who looks upon what is hidden.

A hotel clerk with a half-smoked and partly chewed cigar in his mouth, rested with feet on the table that served for a desk and with chair tipped against the walls. A three-months'-old newspaper lay spread on his lap and his head was drooped forward as if the shock of some item had stopped his heart, suddenly; but it was more likely the tedium of exaggerations about California gold that had put him to sleep. The hotel was full and, it now being near dawn, he was not so frequently disturbed by people coming and inquiring for a place to lie down.

"O-ho, my frien'!" said a deep rich voice, and the clerk awakened with a start.

"Not a place to flop under the roof," he said peevishly and let his head fall again.

"Up up up, my frien' an' tell me where I can fin' the man Dawez. I have news for heem. He is here now?"

"Come in early tonight, for once he did. What you want?"

"If I had come for to tell it to you," said Ferdinand with a queer smile, "you would know all by this time. I come for Dawez."

Grumbling that Dawes might not like to be awakened, which was partly from sympathy through his own irritation at being awakened, the clerk aroused himself sufficiently to go to the foot of the stairs and point vaguely, saying—

"Third door to the right. Got a red chalk mark. That means a steady."

"Steady?"

"Sure. Takes the room by the month. If he gives you ——, don't blame me."

"All right, my frien'," said Ferdinand with that careless audacity which had often got him into trouble, "you do not have the blame if he goes to hell."

Ferdinand went up to the third door on the right, which was marked with red chalk. He cautiously struck a match to see. The hall was dark, black, wholly unlighted. He could hear men snoring. He put his ear to the door, but no one within was snoring. He raised his hand to knock softly, but did not knock. He had a better thought, and gently pushed against the door. The door opened. There was a faint squeak of a badly hung hinge. He paused, listening. All was still. No one moved. Inch by inch he opened the door, then slipped through. The room was solidly black. Carefully he felt his way, touching this and that noiselessly, until he reached the bed. He ran his hand up over the cover and across. No one was there.

Ferdinand held a lighted match above his head and looked about the small room in which there remained only the litter of one who had departed, hurriedly.

"Son of two devils and beloved of both! They guard him!"

XXIX

THAT morning San Francisco for the first time, as it was to do many times in following years, awakened wrathfully from the seeming enchantment that crime had put upon the city.

People were profoundly shocked by learning what a violent outrage had been committed upon the Spanish-speaking settlement. Men met in the streets and gazed at one another in astonished dismay as parties of Hounds, with hands full of loot, drunkenly swaggered about, hawking what they had stolen, boasting of what they had done.

Among the citizens was one Sam Brannan, ex-printer, ex-Mormon, ex-preacher, and now—though later to die in poverty and alone—the richest merchant in California, and one of the most generous and courageous. Whatever his faults, he had a real even if somewhat theatrical courage. That morning Brannan impulsively mounted a barrel at the corner of Clay and Montgomery streets and cursed the Hounds. So great a crowd gathered that people could not get near enough to hear him.

Followed by the crowd, he then went to the Plaza and mounted the roof of the one story building occupied by the alcalde, himself a Hound sympathizer. From there, Brannan cursed the Hounds and the men that supported them.

The Hounds were astonished and indignant. The responsive demonstration of the crowd made them uneasy. At the very hour when they felt most secure in the rule of the city, the city openly gathered and cheered men who denounced them.

The Hounds, backed by the sheriff, the alcalde, and supported by influential men, were at first defiant. While Brannan was speaking, word was sent to him that his stores and buildings would be fired immediately if he did not stop. He then displayed the quality that was later to make him appear in the history of the city as perhaps the most audacious spirit among the Vigilantes. Instead of hurrying off to guard his property, he remained on the alcalde's roof and used even stronger words.

The Hounds grew desperate. The boldest of them surged into the crowd, drew pistols, and threatened to shoot him, then and there.

Then and there, Brannan ripped open the shirt on his breast and dared them to shoot.

The crowd roared with cheers and threats, and the Hounds withdrew. In all parts of the city they began to slink from sight, for other men, as brave if not as dramatic as Brannan, had mounted boxes and barrels and roofs.

Then the miners, the citizens, the strangers, with that sudden and orderly movement of purpose that was repeatedly, all during the gold-days of California, to appall cocksure scoundrels who felt security in their numbers, and to astonish the world by the composure and firmness of what was, after all, mob-rule, organized themselves into four companies, of a hundred men in each, and began at once to search out and arrest the Hounds.

At the same hour a subscription was being taken for the unforunate Chileans.

Emigrants who disembarked that day found the city under arms, on guard, with un-uniformed men marching in military groups, silently, ominously, through the streets. The name was as yet unknown,

but the guardian spirit of the Vigilantes had appeared in San Francisco.

Such, in every particular, is the account that history affirms in regard to the events of Monday, July 16th, 1849.

Among those who readily followed Brannan's example was Wallace B. Kern. He too got on a barrel, and also when the Hounds threatened to shoot him, he answered with a warning that made them tremble—

"Shoot—and be hanged!"

Kern was one of those chosen as leaders to arrest the Hounds. He, although a lawyer, had become a miner, successful and proud of his calluses; and he was recently from the mines where evil men were hanged, summarially.

When the first group of Hounds, terrified, dejected as wet pups, were brought triumphantly into the Plaza, Kern made a whirlwind speech and amid roaring cheers called for a rope.

At that moment Judge Deering strode to the box from which Kern was speaking, and literally pushing him from it, mounted.

"In the name of God, *no!*" he thundered, and his powerful voice rolled across the Plaza, resounding in echoes from the very walls.

Hales, who stood near by, a companion of Kern's in the Hound hunting, listened in amazement to the dramatic and sonorous power of Judge Deering's words. His great full face was ablaze with passion, his words with eloquence; his big body, that seemed sluggish and nearly awkward in daily intercourse, now had a bearing of majesty; he was towering and vigorous, his gestures were full of command; he moved men, and all the more remarkably since he appealed not to their violence, but to their judgment.

"—better ten guilty men live than put to death one innocent—"

His voice flowed out over the Plaza. Men hung to him with their eyes and seemed to have lost their breath. Hales felt actually a chill as he watched and listened; he did not feel that it was better ten guilty men live than that one who was not so guilty be put to death, but he did feel the tremendous personality and convictions of this man who urged a mob to respect the law of the land.

When at the end of some fifteen minutes Judge Deering stopped, and looked about over the mass of men, there was silence. The man by Kern who held a coil of rope dropped it with a half-furtive movement. The wretched Hounds, grouped under a guard, stared upward at Judge Deering in pitiable thankfulness.

He stepped from the box, dignified, flushed, dripping with sweat. There were no cheers. He had moved them to sobriety, and everywhere men began talking gravely among themselves, and nodding, acknowledging the right of prisoners to trial.

And from that day until this no man has been hanged in San Francisco without at least the semblance of a trial.

"Judge, you're wrong, dead wrong!" said Wallace B. Kern, the first to grasp and shake Judge Deering's hand. "But by —— sir, if I could make a speech like that, I wouldn't care if I was wrong!"

Judge Deering smiled slightly, but answered gravely—

"Then, sir, you would be wrong!"

COL. NEVINSON was in a state of astonished anger at the uprising of citizens; and there was also talk of holding him responsible for the outrage to the Chileans. Moreover, other men, politicians, who had supported and profited by the Hounds as much as himself, were running to cover, hastening to make their peace with the mob leaders, abandoning the Hounds to rope, whip, or whatever else the mob might decide upon.

Even he had been advised by friends to leave the city for a time. He had told such friends to go to ——, that he came and went as he pleased, and that he would continue to come and go as he pleased as long as he had one good hand with which to draw a gun; and that he would be ——, sir, if he did not say in public what he had said in private, which was, sir, that the Hounds—he called them Regulators—had done a worthy service to the city; and, sir, if necessary, his last dollar would be spent in their defense!

Col. Nevinson made his way to Judge Deering's office and found him there, alone.

"Sir," said the Colonel, "I want to congratulate you for the admirable address on the Plaza. Law must be upheld!" With a careless fling he threw a bag of gold on the table. "There's your retainer, Deering. And for every man you acquit, there will be more—a hundred, two hundred, three

hundred, whatever you say. Seventeen have been arrested by this mob. They have legal rights, those boys. They acted a little wild, but they did the city a service in cleaning out the greasers. I put them up to it, sir, and I'll stand by them now. You take care of them and I'll take care of you. This public excitement will soon blow over. You know their rights. You can get them off. By ——, sir, you could acquit the devil before a jury of parsons. And law must be upheld, respected!"

"Sir," said Judge Deering with solemn and dignified anger, straightening his large rotund body. "You are right. The law must be upheld and respected. The law accords to each man, whatever his villainy, certain rights. And I, sir," continued the Judge with gathering wrath, "have too great a veneration for the majesty of the law to cheat even a scoundrel out of his right to be hanged, legally!"

Col. Nevinson looked at him blankly, dumbfounded.

"What has changed *you*, Deering? Why, there on the Plaza you spoke in their defense!"

"No, sir! No, sir! I did not! With the last breath that is in my body, sir, I will defend any man's right to trial by jury. I will defend any man's right to all the safeguards prescribed by law—but seek to have guilty men acquitted, no! No! Never! My oath, sir, as an attorney imposes upon me the solemn obligation of doing all within my power to assist suspected men to a fair and impartial trial by jury. It does not, sir, impose upon me the duty of defending and acquitting men whom I believe to be scoundrels and for whom I have unmeasured contempt!"

"Why, Deering, you're mad! You talk like a fool, sir!"

Judge Deering acknowledged this with a grave bow, and without resentment.

"How do you know these men are guilty, sir?" demanded Nevinson.

"I don't, sir. But what I say, sir, is that I will not—I never did and to the day of my death I never will!—pledge myself as you have requested—" he swept his hand at the bag of gold—"to defend and undertake to acquit men when I, sir, am ignorant of the merits of their case. I will, sir, undertake to see that any man is tried fairly according to the Law, but may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, and may my heart stop dead, sir, if I ever lift my voice to shield and acquit, sir, a man whom I believe to be guilty as charged!"

"I don't understand. I don't understand you," said Col. Nevinson, frowning blankly. "Why the law—that, sir, is what lawyers are for!"

"No, no," said Judge Deering, lowering his voice, seeing that it was hopeless to try to make the colonel understand. "It may be what the devil uses some of them for. But God nor man never intended that my profession, sir, should be used as an ægis of crime."

"I am surprized at you, Deering. I *am* amazed! I thought you were a friend of mine, and I thought you had courage! But I see, sir, that since your masterful address on the Plaza, you have been reached—intimidated, sir! by that —— mob!"

Col. Nevinson, with a rapacious grab, snatched up the buckskin sack of gold and with angered steps crossed the room and went clattering down the stairs.

Judge Deering sighed deeply, thoughtfully scratched at his low fringe of hair, then shook his massive old head slightly and turned to his paper-strewn desk, groping about half absently for his big black pipe.

XXX

WHILE these stirring events were taking place, others that greatly stirred the good Dona were also taking place. She was so furious that she was almost calm, but in the manner of a tense stealth.

Dona Elvira had sent the mulatto Sam all about the city until he found the colonel and delivered a message that she wished to see him. But Col. Nevinson, besides not caring to go to her, was in a state of exasperated activity, attending to many things.

Finally the mulatto, almost more afraid of the colonel than of his mistress, came with a new message, edged with anger and imperative, which said that if Col. Nevinson did not come to her within an hour, she would come to him, wherever he might be.

To the good Dona it seemed that this was the unluckiest of days. Anna Hales was on her hands and sick, not only sick but near to death. Poor food, wretched sleep, bad whisky, and evil living had so torn the woman's body that at the first and even

slight attempt to wean herself from the red bottle, she had collapsed and was put to bed in a fever.

Instead of growing better after the doctor came late at night, Anna began to hover in unconsciousness between life and death, as if she were to occupy indefinitely a room and bed, crowding Tota to a couch and into ill-humor.

The queenly Elvira loathed sickness. However, there seemed nothing to do but keep the woman a while or throw her into the street; and though Elvira might wish Anna would die, and hurry about it, she could not bring herself into sufficient heartlessness to have her carted off.

Two or three times she had determined to send for Hales, to say, "There she is—now take the thing away!" but the good Dona had other, and even more distracting things to think about.

She had heard of Ilona Tesla, heard of her from Monsieur Max, from Sam, who was a sort of catch-all for gossip; and besides, the doctor who came late to see Anna Hales had been the same called for Mr. Tesla; and this physician did not have a very kindly feeling toward Col. Nevinson.

Col. Nevinson at last came to Elvira, but in a hurry to depart. Many important affairs were upon his hands; so in a general state of high anger and exasperation he came to her rooms, prepared to make short work in plain words of the quarrel that he expected.

But the colonel, though a man of considerable experience with a variety of women, had much to learn; and the good Dona proceeded from the first glance of greeting to teach him some things that he did not know and had never imagined.

Elvira was dressed with care, charmingly, and she greeted him with an eager pleasantness, just as surprizing as it was deceptive.

She smiled gaily, put out her hand, took his hand, held it and, with a sort of absent-minded air of affection, stroked the arm he still carried in the black silk.

At first he stared at her suspiciously and remained stiff and cold; his voice was sharply to the point.

"What is it, madam? What is it you want?"

"Want? Why, Colonel! To see *you*, of course!" she answered innocently. "I know, poor man, you are worked to anger by that fool mob. But don't blame *me*. Don't blame your Elvira. I didn't have anything to do with it—did I?"

Her dark eyes had the half-playful earnest stare of an affectionate woman.

He had come prepared to face her anger; but she appeared to know, as yet, nothing to make her angry. Anyhow, he felt that he had troubles enough for this day without going out of his way to break with her.

But he did say: "I thought you were angry over something. That nigger said—"

"You know Sam's a fool. And I would have gone after you—to find you. I am angry! Why, Colonel dear, you haven't been near me for *days!* How do you think I feel, so all alone? Come, sit down."

She led him to the couch and sat beside him, asking—

"Colonel dear, tell me all about everything."

And, patiently, she let him talk. He told of Tucks, his branded back, of the horse, of the mob's uprising; and his very recital reminded him of the pressing affairs on hand. He stood up, ready to go.

Elvira pulled him down beside her, clingingly.

"But where have you been all this time? And now you go? Just as if you were in a hurry to get away! Are you? You don't love me any more? Then go—go on—" she gave him the playful push of the woman who means to cling.

He sat for another fateful moment, and her arms caressed him; her perfumed lips went to his face, hung there in a long moist kiss.

"Now, Colonel dear, where have you been? You didn't come near me yesterday. How do you think I can live if you stay away?"

Col. Nevinson pulled at his neck. His collar felt hot and tight.

"Mr. Tesla and I went out to the ranch. We had some business matters to talk over, and—"

"Ah, my *rancho?*" asked Elvira, sweetly innocent, with a suggestion of gratitude.

To explain, to deny it, would mean the quarrel that he was already glad to avoid; besides, he had enough troubles for one day. So he said:

"Er—yes—Cowden's. The deed was put in my name, but—ah, Mr. Tesla and—"

"What do we care in whose name," she said, quite playfully, kissing him, "as long as ever'body knows who it b'longs to, really. Why did you go, dear?"

"Business. And—er—"

"Yes. Business, and—"

"And—and an hour after we returned Mr. Tesla was shot!"

"Yes. Wasn't that awful! That man Hales was to blame, wasn't he? Oh that Hales—strange, wasn't it, we talked of him——"

"Is *that* her husband?" he asked.

"Oh my Colonel, don't ask *me*! I—what can I know?"

He sat thoughtfully, not at all noticing the steady oblique gaze of her narrowed eyes; then she spoke with the art of the Serpent:

"And Mr. Tesla's little girl? Monsieur Max said she was just a child, with a nurse. What will become of her—I wonder?"

"I don't know," said the Colonel broodingly, thinking that he knew very well what would soon become of her, and of the security, honor and protection that would be hers.

"Max says she is a pretty little thing. Is she?"

"Um—yes—rather. In a way."

"What color are her eyes?"

"A kind of brown. Light brown—full of light. Almost yellow. Golden, you know."

"And her hair? Has the child pretty hair?"

"Dark and—and lots of it. Very pretty hair."

"Like mine?"

He looked, as if appraisingly, at the jet hair of Elvira's; and, with self-conscious shrewdness—

"Not nearly as beautiful as yours. No."

For that Elvira kissed him full on the mouth; then asked—

"How old is she?"

"Oh I don't know. Very young, just a child."

"Oh the dear little thing! I'd like to see her. Won't you bring her to see me? Today! Isn't she here? I love children. Will you?"

"Oh—ah—really—just a child and—"

"And what?" Elvira asked as if teasing.

"You know what I mean. Just an innocent child and—"

"And," she asked icily, drawing herself up, drawing from him, "What do you mean by that? What am I? Will it hurt this *child* if I look at her. Just what do you mean, sir!"

Col. Nevinson, stiffened, amazed.

"I am going," he said, standing up. "I have business—I have been here too long now."

Elvira rose up before him. "You are not going," she said fiercely, "until you tell me why I may not look at this golden-eyed-wonderfully-eyed *child* you took out to my *rancho* to keep!"

"—— Ferdinand!" cried Col. Nevinson, confessing everything in an impulsive oath.

"Ferdinand! Was he there? Have you bought Ferdinand too?" she said furiously between her teeth. "Oh I see now! It was all planned that I should know nothing! Ferdinand, even he! But you—you come here today, now, lie to me, kiss me, fondle me—and yet are in a hurry to get back to that *child*! Oh I know all about her. I know how much of a *child* she is! Cronin told where she went and who took her! Max knows her. She spent the night in his room—with him, too, I hear."

"Madam, you lie! —— you, more respect! You lie, sir! You lie!"

"*You*—you dare swear at me! And *who* is she? *What* is *she*!"

"Madam," said Col. Nevinson fiercely, urged by a gallant respect for Ilona, and by the ungallant impulse to crush this woman who had tricked him into caresses, and deception about Miss Tesla, "Madam, I hope to have the honor of making her my wife!"

"Your wife! Oh! Then what am I to be? What of me? Your kisses and lies? What have I been made to think?"

"Madam, you know—you know that between us there has never been—you know, madam that—" then, violent with anger for the way that she had within the hour tricked him into the very caresses for which she denounced him—"you, madam, are not fit to be any man's wife!"

"Oh-o-o-o-o-o-o-Oh!" said Elvira in one long breath, mingling astonishment and fury.

Her hand swung to her breast and the handle of the dagger appeared between her fingers, but he threw back his shoulders as if to take the blow and looked her straight in the eyes.

Something so nearly like fear of him came over her that her hand dropped away from the jeweled hilt; but the shudder she felt might not have deterred her had not her head, even in that instant, been flashing with half-glimpsed thoughts of a better revenge. There was Ferdinand, who must

purchase forgiveness by whatever she commanded, and Hales. At the thought of him she became ablaze with rashness.

With a rush she reached the door, threw it wide, pointed within.

"There—there, do you know *her*! That's one of your women. Know her?"

Tota, who was in the room, sprang up, frightened; but no one noticed the negress. Col. Nevinson peered angrily, and much without interest, at the wasted features of the woman who lay in a fever coma, and was not aware of the use to which Elvira now put her wretchedness.

"You don't know *her!* No! I'll tell you—that's Anna Hales, wife of Dick Hales! He's not dead, he's here! Looking for her—and *you!* I got hold of her to keep him from finding her, so he would not learn about *you!* I did it for you! And this is how you repay me! But do you know what I'm going to do? I'll tell you! I'll send for him! I'll send for him! Yes, Señor Colonel, I'll send for somebody else too and show *her* how you treat your women. I'm going to send for that little Tesla whore—"

Col. Nevinson struck her. She was not a man, so he could not shoot. But he struck her full in the face with a blow that stung and sent her reeling backward, then tramped from the room.

She leaned with her back to the wall against which she had fallen and stared after him so confused with amazement, anger, hate, despair that she could not speak and for a wildly staring moment did not move. Being who she was, and what she was, Dona Elvira hung in bewilderment, and did not know whether she most loved or hated him; but whichever it was, he would never, never, be forgiven.

XXXI

SOME of the Citizen leaders, and particularly Wallace B. Kern, felt that Col. Nevinson's importance should not give him inimunity.

Many of the Hounds, crumpled of body, as broken as rats that a terrier has shaken, with eager whining told and retold that Col. Nevinson had sent them to attack the greasers. Moreover, he arrogantly admitted it. That was too like defiance to pass unchallenged.

Six of the Citizen committee, headed by Kern, moved off from the Parker House where the committee had headquarters to arrest him.

Hales, saying—

"No. There's bad blood between us. It wouldn't be fair," had refused to go with them.

They happened to know at that moment where to look for the colonel, and found him near a corral, swearing at a teamster who had neglected his promise to send a wagon and team to bear Mr. Tesla's body into the country.

"You are under arrest, Colonel," said Kern.

Col. Nevinson glared at each of them in turn. He was surrounded by men, quiet and stern, who personally respected him; but this was duty.

"Why—" with many oaths—"do you arrest me?"

"We believe that you instigated the attack on the Chileans."

"——-and-fire, sir! I did! Not on the Chileans alone, but on all the —— greasers in California!"

"Kindly come with us, Colonel."

"Where to? What for, sir?"

"You will be placed under guard until your trial."

"You, sir, can go to ——!" said the Colonel. "Brave men, you are! Six of you! On one man with a crippled arm! I repeat, sir, you can all go to ——!"

"And you, sir," said Kern, with no loss of temper, but grimly, "may swear all you like—but go you do!"

"Sir, you interrupt me in the sad duty of conveying the remains of my good friend Mr. Tesla into the country for burial. And his daughter, sir. She is under my protection. Set your trial, I'll be there! Do you think I would run like a pickpocket, —— your soul!"

"Unless you come, sir, you will be carried bodily," said Kern.

With tone that vibrated he cried—

"By ——, sir, the man that lays hand on me will never—never—live to —"

The colonel's face grew black with hot blood, and his left hand moved ominously.

Then, suddenly, his voice changed to a wrathful urgency—

"It is you, all you, who go with me, sir! Come with me. I'll show you—"

The Committee, being sensible men, had no objection to letting the Colonel lead the

way as long as he went with them. Presently they hesitated at the direction he insisted upon, but were persuaded, and accompanied him to Baer's saloon, up the stairs and into the room above.

Tucks, having had his back annointed with oil, was shirtless and had been lying face down on the bed; but, wincing and swearing, he sprang up at the sound of many feet. Half crouching, truculently he faced them. He was naked to the waist. His hair was rumpled, his beard wild, his face thrust forward, his eyes hot; he looked like a madman.

"There, gentlemen, there! Turn 'round, Tucks! There is what those —— greasers have done to one American—my friend! What, too, they have sworn to do to me! Turn 'round, Tucks!"

"No!" Tucks snarled, and shrank back.

But Kern had stepped to one side, and behind him. In a low voice of horror he said—

"Great good God!"

Tucks turned on him savagely, and so displayed his back to the other men, who stared, swore under their breath, muttered threats, damned the greasers and, as friend to friend, asked questions of Col. Nevinson.

Then said Wallace B. Kern—

"Colonel, if any other —— fool tries to arrest you—you send for us! Is that so, boys?"

And they answered that it was.

XXXII

HALES stood by himself at the Parker House bar, meditatively eying a glass of whisky. Elvira's Sam, after much searching, came to his elbow.

"Sah, Missus Elvira she says foh me to tell you, sah, dat Anna Hales is now sho' at her house, waitin' foh to see you, sah!"

Hales looked at him in silence as if examining a rather uninteresting but slightly unpleasant object; and Sam edged off, saying—

"Ah'm sho' tellin' the truf, sah. Hones' sah!"

"You are lying," said Hales without emphasis.

"*No sah!* Ah ain't, sah! Cross mah heart an' hope to die sudden, sah!"

Hales distrusted the good Dona, and did not want to see Anna; moreover he believed this yellow negro was lying. But when Sam, with a lengthy recital of how he himself had found the woman, and where, had convinced Hales, he took a second drink of whisky and went toward Dona Elvira's rooms.

Ferdinand was there. Col. Nevinson, somewhat anxiously, had hurried back to the balcony apartment where Ilona, with the patience of grief, waited through the delay of the colonel's many distractions that she might accompany her father's body on its way to the ranch for burial. He told Ferdinand not to let Ilona out of his sight, and something of why; so that just as soon as the colonel himself was out of sight, Ferdinand hurried off to make his peace with the good Dona, who never forgave a man.

Elvira was sitting rigidly in a chair, and broodingly waited the coming of Hales, for whom she had sent. Her arm rested on the back of the chair; her jeweled fingers were interlaced. There was a red and black bruise on her dark cheek.

When Ferdinand entered she said not a word. He entered cheerfully, as if blown in by a merry wind, and saluting her with a gay flourishing bow, wholly ignored her steady, oblique, sinster gaze. Ferdinand knew more about the good Dona than she knew of herself.

"Oh-ho-o-Oh! What a day. I have seen the faithful deserted by their good father, the devil, who lets them get caught! Tut-tut-tut! How they hang men in this wicked country!" he said in Spanish. "But for a big man who talked like a priest on fire, there would be a feast for little crows! Ah, you look sick, most beautiful of women! Is it that the stomach has had food it did not want, eh?"

"You! You treacherous beast!" She moved only her lips.

"Flower of the Sun, you are sick!"

"Sick! Yes, of you, Apple of the Gibbet!"

"Now what has that —— Ferdinand done? You just tell it to me! I'll poke him in the ribs with a knife—so! Eh!"

"Why didn't you tell me the colonel had a woman at *my* ranch? What are you there for—to take gold from him?"

"It is sure that I will take gold from him, if like some poor men he has too much to carry! Ah, Ferdinand's back it is so broad and strong. He helps friends and strangers to carry their gold if—"

"Stop that chatter! You're not deceiving me. You can't deceive me! Why didn't you tell me when that woman came?"

"Well, I am here. She was there. Sure it is true. What of it, Moon-beam? How do I know why she comes until I find out? Saints they know things before they have time to learn them, but no—not Ferdinand!"

Ferdinand's voice was rich as a viol; his tongue played with sound as his gifted fingers with the strings; his inflections ran from the merry overtone of jest to the resonant echo of sinister menace in the same breath, and back again, all in a breath.

"Can I take your colonel by his little mustache, so! and say, 'Answer me!' Already he has said to me, '—— you, I own this *rancho!*' And I come, Most Beautiful of Women, to know why, ——-and-fire as the Colonel he says, if I give you my money, and you promise me—why I don't own my own *rancho?* Why didn't you tell *me*, Ferdinand, who for years and years has loved you much, that you take my money to give your colonel a little birthday gift, eh? If you give him *my rancho*, how but I know you give him also the permission to bring two women to *my rancho?* I do not know. I do not know. I come to ask of you. Tell me! What is it all about? And why do you sit so like you had a cramp-sickness and look so—"

And Ferdinand, who had a bigger devil in him than any of the multitude that dwelt within the good Dona, imitated her own narrow-eyed gleaming stare.

She had no way of knowing that whatever she might do, or say, his hand would not be raised against her; she felt that he was dangerous, and that he often forgot the gratitude he owed her.

"Don't look at me that way!" she said uneasily, seeing that his fingers fumbled with the handle of the long knife in his sash, a knife that she had seen him throw twenty feet into a mark half as big as the palm of her own small hand.

"Ho-o-o-o-Oh!" he answered softly, and the devil in his eyes gleamed the brighter, "'tis the way you look at me, so! Why? And more why is it that *your* Colonel owns *my rancho*—eh?"

She sprang up, gesturing frantically—

"He lied to me! That's why! Tricked me, fooled me—"

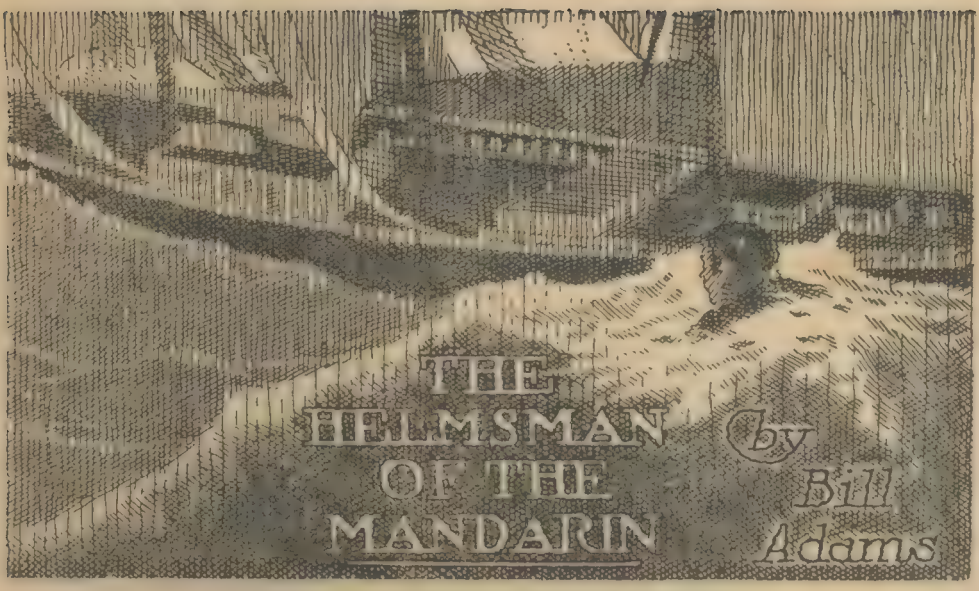
"Ah-ah-ah," said Ferdinand in a low tone of sinister disbelief. "Any man fool you?—Bah, you try now to fool me!"

"Remember Ferdinand—" she faced him with her queenly air—"I saved you from—"

"So? And has it cost you money to feed Ferdinand and buy him what he wears, ever? No! And more than once Señor Death he has said, 'Come here, Ferdinand. You are fat and I am hungry!' And more times that you, Dona, the good God he has saved me! Now maybe I serve him for a while as I have served you so long years, eh? I come here today, now, merry because I love the good Dona Elvira, to talk in a happy way and ask things, and you—" the growl that always alarmed her came into his tone—"you want a quarrel! Ferdinand is no dog! Well then a quarrel we will have, *now!* From this day, Ferdinand is his own man, no more to dance when the good Dona wiggles her finger, so! And now—"

The mulatto Sam threw open the door, stepped aside, and Hales stood there.

TO BE CONTINUED



Author of "Old Sea Flower," "The Mean Second," etc.

JOHN WILLIAMS' forebears had been deep water sailors for generations. Every one knew John Williams' father, the captain of the *Caspar*, and every one liked him. A big, boisterous, easy-going sort of fellow, but of the sort it does not do to thwart. Not that he was not tractable. He was; but he had a quick, hot temper. He wore an obstinate look, for his brows grew close over his nose.

Captain Williams had a pair of spinster sisters-in-law who abominated him, in the first place, because he had run off with their younger sister, and in the second place, because he was what he was, a big, hearty man who, even in the presence of ladies, now and then let fall a hard word. He did not treat them with the respect to which they considered themselves entitled.

Since their younger sister's death at sea, where her baby was born, they had disliked him more than ever. Though he knew what they thought of him, it did not prevent his paying them a visit whenever his ship was in port. He did so because of the respect he had for anything connected with the girl whom he had loved.

When his small son was four, he went to bid them good-by the day before he sailed. The boy was seated securely on his shoulder as he stood in the doorway and wished them good luck.

"We both think that you should leave him with us, John," said the elder sister.

They thought it a crime to take the little lad to sea, and had often told him so.

Big John looked up to the boy on his shoulder and said—

"Sonny, they'd make you a flying fish, wouldn't they?"

Neither the lad nor the ladies knew what he meant.

Big John Williams took the *Caspar* to sea and drove her as usual. He drove her out to China and he drove her home, racing several other clippers all the way. Like many another skipper, he drove a ship too hard for once, and paid the penalty. A day's run from her home port, she piled ashore in misty weather and hung with her bow high, her stern low and her three topgallant masts all broken short.

The last to leave her in the breeches-buoy was her captain's small son. But, ere signaling to the life-saving crew to haul ashore, had he stayed to reassure his terrified child, his own life might have been saved. More than a hundred feet below the topmast head to which the life-line was made fast, a green and white sea boiled. The southwest wind yelled by. Spray flew in sheets above the life-line. He had to shout to make his son hear him. While the white-faced child

"The Helmsman of the Mandarin," copyright, 1925, by Bill Adams.

clung to the buoy, his father waved to the life-saving crew upon the cliff top. Then, in a moment, he was alone upon the *Caspar's* broken topmast head.

He watched the crew haul the buoy with the child in it safe to the cliff, then felt the topmast tremble as the sea-shattered hull below gave way. A moment later little John was fatherless as well as motherless, and the *Caspar* was devoured by the rising tide.

Young John came to his aunts garbed in the clothing in which he had left the *Caspar*, a suit of rough sailor dungaree, made for him by the skilled fingers of the sailmaker. At the back of his little leather brass-buckled belt there hung a sailor's sheath knife which was his great treasure. It looked incongruous and huge on his small body.

Horrified at the child's appearance, the ladies clothed him in what they considered more suitable apparel. His belt and knife were taken away. Numb with the terror of the wreck, he noticed little of what went on around him, and asked continually for his father, and for "Sails," and "Chips," the sailmaker and carpenter. When Aunt Emily, the elder, sought to embrace him he drew away.

"I want 'Black Dutchie.' Where's Black Dutchie?" he asked.

Black Dutchie was cook of the *Caspar*, a brown-faced Hollander of Java, in whose galley the lad had ever been a free and welcome visitor.

His aunts strove to appease him with toys—their own treasures in childhoods of long ago—that were brought from old trunks stored in the attic. He threw the toys aside. His playthings had been a ship's wheel, a fid and marline-spike, fancy knotted ropes and the far-gathered knick-knacks of seafaring men. The women tried in vain to soothe and to entertain him. Accustomed to the pet monkey of the *Caspar's* forecastle, he stared with childish disdain at overfed cats that they brought for his amusement and, his black brows almost meeting above his nose, he pushed himself from them and, stamping his foot, called for Chips and Sails and the Holland sea cook. He refused to be comforted, and every night dreamed of the life-line at the *Caspar's* topmast head. When, in his dreams, terror of the boiling seas far below that masthead wakened him, he cried for his father and the *Caspar's* men.

The dreams faded gradually and, following the aunts about the dull house, he listened to their talk with a pucker of perplexity. They consulted about begonias and geraniums that stood in earthen pots along the window sills, and tried to interest a child, who had seen flocks of wild parrots, in a caged canary.

When, wandering one day alone in the attic, he found his belt and sheath knife and the discarded dungarees and garbed himself as he had always been, Aunt Emily scolded him and robbed him of his goods again. He stormed and called angrily for Black Dutchie and the sailmaker and carpenter of the *Caspar*. Then, wearied with rebellion, he sobbed while she watched him, dismayed.

"We love you, John," she said sternly. "We will take care of you."

She kissed him, while he offered no reciprocation.

That night he slipped out of the house into the high-walled garden. A shrill wind blew, waving the treetops above the red brick wall. Rain fell, and there were no stars. He breathed deep of the fresh wind and, fallen beneath an apple tree, sobbed till he fell asleep exhausted.

They found him there, drenched by the autumn rain, prone on the withered grasses, and, for many days thereafter, nursed him, a doctor coming every day.

When he recovered, he asked no more for any one whom he had asked for ere the illness came. The *Caspar* and his father, Black Dutchie, Sails and Chips seemed all forgotten.

Thereafter he lived alone with the two women in the flower-surrounded house with its wide garden, encircled by the red brick wall. And there, by and by, they taught him reading and writing and arithmetic and bits of French and Latin. They burned the suit of dungaree and flung away the brass-buckled belt and sheath knife. As the years passed he seemed like a child with a forgotten babyhood, without reminiscences, and never spoke again of the things or the people he had known. But except that, and now and then, the quick bursts of sudden temper puzzled them, the women were happy with him in their care.

When he was twelve, because he would not take a book in hand, but ran away and hid from them a whole day through, Aunt Emily took him to her room and talked to him. His eyes grew very bright and, staring

straight into her face, he laughed. Then, half-afraid because she saw in him the captain of the *Caspar*, she slapped his face with a flat palm. At that he neither winced nor spoke, but looked at her with his black brows close. While she gazed at him perplexedly, he turned from her and went out of doors, and after that refused for two whole days to speak to her.

In the succeeding days the sisters talked of school for him, and spoke of the boarding school at Lulling, fifty miles away, beside the sea.

"But if we let him go to Lulling," the younger sister said, "will that be wise?"

The elder answered—

"He has forgotten all about the sea."

So he was sent to Lulling School, and thereafter he lived as one of many boys. He was neither dull nor brilliant. There was nothing to distinguish him from other boys except that, not caring for the games they played, they looked on him a little scornfully till summer came, when all the boys of Lulling School went swimming in the sea. He learned to swim, and because he was eager in the water, they dubbed him "Fish."

When others dived through inward-rolling breakers, he dived deepest and, rising glisten-skinned, shouted and laughed the loudest of them all. When sometimes they watched a far-off ship pass by, he stood amongst them silent, with his big eyes bright and a puzzled look upon his face.

He was eighteen when he left school. No one missed him, and he missed nothing but the sea. He stood six feet two in his bare feet. He was lanky and angular. Though he appeared neither particularly nimble nor athletic, he had an eager look like that of one who, standing within a closed gate, desires to know what lies beyond. The shock of his hair reminded one of the forelock of a black dray horse, and his eyes were almost as black as his hair. Though he looked obstinate, his expression was childish and self-conscious—the expression of one who has long been thwarted with no sufficient explanation of the thwarting.

"Now you're a man," said his Aunt Emily on his return, while he sat looking at the trees wave in the sheltered garden.

Aunt Emily had made her plans for him. There was the little town three miles away.

"I've spoken to our banker for you," she said, "and they'll be glad to let you start with them."

He turned from the wind-blown trees and looked at her as if he saw beyond her, far away and, while she watched his face, said—

"I want to go to sea."

"The bank will be a splendid place for you," she said. "You'll soon rise."

He sat with knitted brows and, because she saw the captain of the *Caspar*, she grew afraid of him.

"I've got to go to sea," he said.

Then Aunt Emily wept.

HE KISSED them when he went away.

Of the sea that he had sailed as a small child, he remembered nothing. There was a nebulousness, a void in which the years of his babyhood were lost and intangible. Of his father, he remembered nothing; of the wreck of the *Caspar* and of his terror at the great height of her sea-rocked topmast head, nothing.

When his train brought him to Liverpool and he stepped to the platform, he was strangely excited, and found himself both interested in and sorry for the hurrying crowds. Later, on the streets, he was aware of men who seemed oddly familiar. They rolled in their walk, and wore a free unworried look as if nothing mattered.

When he crossed the gangway of the *Mandarin*, for what was to be his first voyage, he carried a sea chest nicely balanced on his shoulder. Old man Tasser, who rarely noticed casual men, observed the strong balance, and turned to his mate beside him upon the *Mandarin's* poop.

"Who's that fellow, Mister?" he asked.

"Must be the new apprentice, sir," said the mate, and Tasser forgot all about him.

OLD TASSER'S ship, the *Mandarin*, was both his pride and his despair. Other skippers regarded Tasser with the amused condescension with which men ashore regard a man who is faithful to a faithless wife. One of the handsomest ships in every port she entered, she was at sea one of the most wayward. Owing to some forever undetermined peculiarity of hull or rudder, only those strong-armed sailors most intimate with and most devoted to their calling could steer her on a straight course in hard winds. She was known as a devil to steer. With steam crowding the ports, and ships becoming ever scarcer, sailors of the old style were

rare. She was long, sharp and deep in the water, with a narrow beam after the fashion of the China tea ships—that having been the trade for which she was originally built. Exceedingly lofty, she carried an immense width of spars.

When the new and sole apprentice walked over her gangway she was due to sail in an hour.

Tasser was in a bad mood. Caught in an unguarded moment, egged on by a half-dozen younger skippers, he had bet a hundred pounds upon the outcome of his run to Melbourne, *Mandarin* against the *Wingover*, a ship lately come off the Californian to the Australian trade. Merseyside was boisterous, and he knew himself the butt of the port.

Standing with his mate upon the poop, he watched the crew come aboard. Though the mate had picked them, it was not his fault that they were what they were—a nondescript lot and not to be compared with the sailors of even a dozen years ago. He looked for an old man amongst them. There was not one. Though good enough hands, perhaps, they were not good enough to handle *Mandarin*.

While the mates cast moorings off, Tasser strode up and down his poop with his eyes on *Wingover*, now also casting her moorings off, a ship's length astern.

The two ships were towed to sea till they were abeam of the Skerries light, then were set free by their tow boats, with *Mandarin* a few lengths in the lead.

On *Mandarin's* deck the new apprentice labored amongst the sailors, helping to sheet the topsails home. His sea chest was set down in the tiny room beneath the break of the poop, betwixt the second mate's room and steward's pantry. That room, far removed from the quarters of the foremast sailors, was to be his solitary home.

The sailors, all more or less drunk, but not too drunk to recognize his greenness, jested at his expense, which in no way perturbed him. While he would some day be a captain, they would never be but what they were—plain foremast sailors. He pulled on the ropes with a satisfied look in his eyes.

Laying to her course like a mare well-ridden to the hurdles, *Wingover* was creeping up astern. That her crew were also drunk did not matter. Just as he can go aloft to shake a topsail loose, so any drunken sailor can steer an easy-steering ship. It is second nature, simple as walking.

Unless he were some old-time shellback of another day, no drunken man could steer *Mandarin* true.

While old Tasser swore beside a beery helmsman, *Mandarin* yawed.

All men who know, know that the best man at a ship's wheel, better even than an old time shellback, is a man green to ships and to the sea. Because he steers nervously, he steers true; where others, in whom familiarity has bred too great a sureness, let their eyes rove the deck or the horizon.

Tasser, berating the helmsman, caught sight of the apprentice at the topsail halyards, and hastening to the break of the poop, blew his whistle.

"Send that feller to the helm, Mister," he said when the mate came.

The apprentice took *Mandarin's* wheel, with Tasser beside him.

The wind, out of northwest, was on the quarter. All ships steer hardest on a quartering wind.

While Tasser murmured instructions, the apprentice learned to steer; and *Mandarin*, running true, held *Wingover*.

It was four of a wintry afternoon, the sea gray under high northwest clouds that scurried over it.

After a quarter of an hour the helmsman's arms began to ache.

Mandarin fought him and, though his arms were strong, her steering called for new and unaccustomed tension. While Tasser went to the break of the poop to look at the set of the sails, he clenched his teeth, frowning till his close-set eyebrows almost met. The wind blew by and through him. The sea hissed just below. Knowing that he had found the thing he wanted, he smiled, and spoke to *Mandarin*.

On deck the sailors nodded to each other. They were sobering now.

"She'll be an easy steerer. The kid can steer," they said.

At six o'clock when, with full sail set, the two ships still lay close abeam, a man went to the wheel to relieve the apprentice who had been there now two hours.

"Get forrard," snapped old Tasser.

As the fellow ambled off, surprized—for two hours is a sailor's wheel trick—Tasser asked the apprentice—

"Can ye hold her a while yet?"

The big apprentice, with his gaze upon the compass bowl, nodded, though his limbs were aching.

Wingover was fallen a full ship's length astern.

When the mate came to the poop, old Tasser said—

"A natural-born sailor, Mister."

But the mate, who knew that green men steer best, and had no money on the run to Melbourne, said nothing.

The apprentice was enduring torture. His shoulders felt to be tearing from the sockets and his ribs were strained.

When the second mate asked the mate, "How long's the Old Man going to leave that fellow there?" the mate shrugged his shoulders.

He held *Mandarin* for four full hours, until the hidden sun went down and a full moon sent dim light through partings in the clouds. When he left her at eight bells he walked forward stumblingly, and with his shoulders drooped. No one saw him so. Ships are indifferent to aching.

He fell into the bunk in his small room without undressing, with but a hasty bite of food; then slept. While Tasser on the poop swore at a helmsman who steered waywardly as *Wingover* stole up her sidelights shining, green and red, from close astern.

At midnight the two ships ran neck and neck.

When the iron bell beat out the hour, old Tasser said—

"Send that young feller to the helm, Mister."

The mate, calling him, received no answer.

"Where's the kid?" men asked.

The second found him sleeping still, unawakened by the clamour of the iron bell and forgotten by the sailor who should have roused him.

"Get out," said the second mate, "get to the wheel."

The second stared at him amusedly, a youngster to be broken to the sea, to Tasser and his *Mandarin*.

When, half in a dream still, he went up to the poop, the sea threw a spray to kiss him saltly.

The sailors laughed on their way forward from the midnight muster. The man who by right should have gone to take the wheel was well satisfied to sit with his messmates. But they said:

"The Old Man's mad. The kid can't steer forever."

When he took the wheel *Wingover* was leading *Mandarin*. He ached all through. Old Tasser at his side said—

"Have ye ever steered before?"

"No sir," he answered.

He felt a quick devotion to old Tasser, a short hard-featured little man whose steely voice rang not unkindly. Some day he would be master of a ship, like Captain Tasser. That was all he knew, save that he loved the *Mandarin* beneath his touch.

"Steady, boy. Watch her," said old Tasser, and in a minute added:

"Can ye hold her the full watch, d'ye think? The full four hours?"

"I'll try, sir," he said.

Presently the wind hauled round and came out of west so that *Mandarin*, lying deep in the sea, held to her course more easily. While Tasser chortled to himself, *Wingover's* lights grew dim astern.

While for the first part of the four hours that he held her, the sailors laughed, they later thought of deck work in the day and asked:

"What if the kid steers this way in the day? We'll not get to steer."

Steering by night is, in fine weather especially, the deep water sailor's displeasure. He might be stealing sleep beneath the lee of a deck house, or sitting yarning with his messmates. By day he likes to steer, for he thus escapes the toilsome labor of the deck, the scouring and scrubbing, and worse yet, the going aloft in dirty weather.

"Th' ol' man's breakin' him in," they said.

WHEN at four of a dark morning he left the helm again, he walked stiffly and in a maze. Though the aching was worn from his limbs, he was utterly weary. All night he had had but four hours sleep. Now there would be four more. Not staying to undress or take a bite of food, he slept again.

When next they awakened him, he was glad to eat and to drink hot coffee and rub his hands and arms to ease the soreness in them. A hard wind blew. The sea was black astern and clouds hung low along *Mandarin's* mastheads. Green and white water boiled along her sides. Her tall masts groaned, old Tasser driving her.

When the bell struck for him to go on deck, he saw the mate there with the port watch sailors. They clued a sail up, and the canvas, threshing, beat against its gear.

"Up you go, sailor," the mate sang out to

him. "Give them a hand to make that sail fast now!"

He climbed, after the sailors, into the rigging. The mate came at his heels. From the poop old Tasser looked up to him. The wind moaned and *Mandarin* rolled heavily. A hundred feet above him the beating sail thundered; below him, the sea. Beneath his hands the rigging vibrated to the wind's drum, to the leaping of *Mandarin*. His breath caught. A sort of horror came upon him. Before his eyes the mast, the gear, the sea beyond, swayed in an eddying mist. Clutching the shrouds, he crept up slowly. A sailor above looked down and laughed at him. His head swam. He went slower, and high above him some one jeered. When he came to the futtock shrouds, sixty feet up from the sea, he trembled and could go no farther. He wanted to jump, to throw himself down to the boiling white waters that reached up for him. But that the mate laid hold upon his ankle, steadying him, he would have fallen.

"Get down," said the mate, "afore you falls an' messes up the deck."

For a moment he clung where he was and strove to go on. Then, with laughter above him and the mate saying, "get down afore you mess the deck up," he started down in disillusionment, knowing that the sea was not for him, for height was horror.

When he stepped to the deck old Tasser called—

"Get to the helm."

He hurried to the wheel.

The sailor who turned the wheel over to him growled—

"Flying-Fish!"

He winced at that opprobrious term.

When Tasser, coming to his side, said, "Watch her," he loved old Tasser and the *Mandarin*, too.

Presently the mate came to the poop and Tasser said:

"Go easy with that lad. He'll get used to it."

Mandarin flew.

He did not get used to it. Each time the mate sent him aloft his eyes swam and his limbs all trembled. The crew laughed at him. But when the mate sent him to steer, each time a sail was taken in, so that one of them must needs go aloft where he should have gone, they hated him.

For his first week at sea he steered continually in his watch on deck, often the full four hour stretch. *Wingover* was lost under the northern horizon. His arms grew harder, and his deep chest widened. The mate, treating him as if he were a rope or wheel-spoke, an inanimate thing, ignored him.

When, by and by, fine weather came and little sunny breezes in which any man could steer *Mandarin*, he took regular turns at steering with the sailors, two hours in thirty only. At other times the mate sent him to do the dirty work, the scrubbing and scouring. He chipped the iron rust from the great cable links and cleaned the pig and chicken houses on the forward hatch. The sailors paid no heed to him in passing by. He was a flying-fish sailor, unfit for the sea.

In the evenings when they all sat upon the forward rail to yarn and sing and sometimes dance to some one's concertina, he sat in his small room and brooded there alone and counted off the hours till he would steer *Mandarin* again. In the long watches of the night he talked to her under his breath.

Tasser ignored him now, as all the others did.

Often at night when it was dark, he stole into the rigging, trying to get used to heights above the sea, but always came back shivering. Now and again by day the mate sent him aloft, to try him, but always called—

"Get down, afore you falls and messes up the deck."

Sometimes the mate asked—

"What did you come to sea for?"

He lived like that for forty days on end.

Seeing his strength they gave him heavy work to do, and could not give him anything too hard. While he did two men's labor, men winked to one another, saying—

"Look at the flying fish!"

If they grew tired of jesting and make friends with him he avoided them.

"You'd ought to have gone steward," a sailor said one day, and he turned from the man, red-faced at thought of such a flunkey's job.

His hands were tarry and hard with roughened skin. He looked the greatest of *Mandarin's* sailors. When all the dirty work was done about the deck, and while the sailors still sat up aloft and spliced and rove off gear, he waited on the China cook and Finnish carpenter. The pigs and chickens were still left to his care. He dreaded the broken pidgin of the little cook, the soft tones of the commiserating carpenter. The

pigs and chickens, knowing him well, greeted him noisily.

When, far down in the south forties, a small white speck appeared far astern, old Tasser said:

"*Wingover*. She's crept up on us. She goes her best in little breezes. But we'll soon get wind again now."

That night, when Flying-Fish was gone to sleep, it blew, and while the green and red sidelights of the *Wingover* dipped and winked astern, a west gale wakened. Tasser said—

"Get that boy to the helm and take them 'gallantsails off her, Mister!"

The man from whom he took the wheel, knowing that he must go aloft himself, swore roundly, and in a little while the sailors, working high aloft along the yards, talked to each other, cursing the Flying-Fish.

He steered her for the rest of that night while, hidden in darkness, other men hurried up and down her rolling masts and out upon her storm-racked yard-arms.

When day came the sailors growled to one another. Some wanted to go aft and make complaint to Tasser. But, because of the hard set of the old captain's jaw, none dared lead the way.

From daylight to noon the Flying-Fish slumbered; then took the helm again, for while *Wingover* came booming through the sea, *Mandarin* yawed waywardly beneath a rough-faced sailor's hands. Tasser ceased to swear when he took hold of her. That night the wind was shifty and while Flying-Fish slumbered, men ran from brace to brace and back, and trimmed the sails continually. When, at midnight, the mate wakened him, it snowed.

With snowflakes whirling round him and the *Mandarin's* a' wing below, he steered till day came back. He had grown giant-armed and giant-chested now, and *Mandarin* could no longer weary him. While green waters thundered at her sides, he stamped his feet and sang a song that he had heard the sailors sing in the fine weather. He talked to her and, running free under his fingers, she threw spume up high and drenched the sailors laboring on her deck. When daylight came two men, sent to her helm, steered her less truly than he alone had done.

Day upon day and night upon night the west gales howled. The deck was knee-deep in water. The sails were stiff and every halyard strained.

Aboard the *Wingover* an angry skipper, wondering who it could be that held the *Mandarin*, kept a great press of sail upon his ship and drove her mercilessly.

"She'll not get away from us in this," he told his mate.

But, with too great a spread of sail upon it, one of his masts gave, so that, crippled for a week, *Wingover* crawled through the sea until repairs were made.

On *Mandarin* a sailor said to his mates—

"If Flying-Fish don't leave her when we gets to Melbourne, I does."

"And so does I," said another.

"An' me," another said.

Now upon raging days, the sailors fed the two black pigs and shivering chickens. While the white sea birds screamed about *Mandarin's* stern, Flying-Fish steered and slept and slept and steered again.

Sometimes the men grumbled to the mate, who said—

"Oh, you'll soon see Melbourne. He won't stay with her."

They said—

"He'd better leave her, the poor flying-fish."

Old Tasser said—

"If *Wingover* gets into port before I leave, I'll challenge her for the run home, too."

He did not know that all his sailors grumbled, cursing him and his ship and Flying-Fish.

WHEN they sailed into Melbourne, after a passage almost as fast as those made in earlier days by *Marco Polo* and *Red Jacket* and *Thermopylae*, they all walked aft and asked to see the master. Tasser came. They knew that sailors in the Australian ports were few and hard to find, and that old Tasser would be keen to hurry out to sea again as soon as *Mandarin* was ready.

When their leader said—

"We ain't no farm boys, sir."

Tasser asked—

"What d'ye mean?"

"The 'prentice, sir," they said. "If he stays, we goes."

Tasser knew himself helpless. He called the Flying-Fish to his chart room door.

"What did ye come to sea for, boy?" he asked, and added, "ye're no use wi' any ship but *Mandarin*."

The Flying-Fish knew that.

"Ye'll have to go," said Tasser, not unkindly, and added, "Ye might go in steam."

So Flying Fish left *Mandarin* and wandered off along the wharf, while all her sailors, calling after him, bade him go seek a farm where pigs and chickens were. He did not look back till, at the street's far end, he turned a moment to see the sun of morning on her mastheads.

For two weeks he hung about the wharfs and did odd jobs at anything that he could find to do until the day when *Mandarin* sailed out. She went in a hard breeze, and steering waywardly, so that his fingers twitched at sight of her and, half feeling her remembered spokes, he humored her in fancy. When she was gone, her mastheads lost beneath the sea, his face was wan.

That evening *Wingover* sailed in and people laughed at her, a fast ship beaten by old *Mandarin*.

"Tasser left word for you," they said. "He'll whip you home."

"I'd like to know who steered her," thought the master of *Wingover*.

But since no one along the water front knew aught of Flying-Fish, no one told him.

They rushed *Wingover's* dispatch, and on the day that she was due to sail the Flying-Fish, seated upon a bollard on the wharf, watched them get sail aloft. He shuddered looking up to her great spars, as wide as *Mandarin's*.

Her master stood without her cabin door, and there talked angrily to a lean negro who wore a dirty apron over dirty trousers.

"Get out," the Flying-Fish heard her master say. "I've had enough of you."

He saw the negro walk ashore and heard him curse the master. Then, as the fellow passed the bollard where he sat, asked him—

"What was your rating there?"

The negro spat and swore, and turned to shake a fist at *Wingover*.

"I was her steward, boy," he said. "She is a slut, that's all, and I is glad that I is done with her."

When he was gone the Flying-Fish crossed the ship's gangway and rapped at the cabin door. When the master came he asked—

"You want a steward, sir?"

The master, taken with his clean look and strong young limbs, signed him on as steward with no time spent in asking any questions. He was in a great rush to follow *Mandarin* and catch her. So Flying-Fish took his sea chest aboard into the steward's room, where he would live alone again, with naught to do but wait upon the table of the mates and master. Soon he came out to her quarter-deck and, hungry for a glimpse of *Mandarin*, looked up aloft with hands below his apron.

A passing sailor greeted him.

"W'y hello, flunkey! You're a big buck to be a steward, eh?"

He turned away without an answer and, while *Wingover* went out to sea, stared through an open port, a little bit content to be at sea again, though but a flunkey.

When they set topsails, he heard them at their singing and went out to deck to help them haul. They cheered his strength that sent great sails aloft so easily. The mate stared at him.

"What are you steward for?" he asked.

And another sailor said—

"You pore ol' flunkey!"

Because he kept the cabin spotless as a gem, the mates and master liked him well, though wondering often that a man like him could be content to wear a steward's apron and wipe dishes clean and wait upon a table.

One day when they were in the saloon alone together the master asked—

"What ship did you go out to Melbourne with? Were you in steam?"

And Flying-Fish replied—

"Yes, sir, in steam."

Then, because a sailor in the lamp locker near by had overheard, it got about the decks that he had been a steward in a steamer, and because steam was fast driving sailing ships from off the sea, they all scorned him.

Sometimes they called to him to come and lend a hand upon the braces, and he was glad to go and pull with them. Only it made him hate yet more the apron that he wore. He felt an ache toward the ship, and longed to hold her wheel, but dared not ask. Once when a hard wind blew, and he stood on the poop to see the waves roll past, and watched the helmsman steering *Wingover*, the mate called him to come and help watch pick up a sail aloft. Then, because he could not climb aloft, and being steward, could not be made to go, they all jeered him. A sailor dubbed him "Flying-Fish" again, and they called him sometimes Flying-Fish and sometimes—flunkey.

Often at night he dreamed that he was steering *Mandarin* with Tasser at his side, and heard the old man's, "Watch her, boy!"

Waking after that, he hated *Wingover*, a ship that any man could steer.

There came a day when, under a dark sky in the fifties, they caught sight of the *Mandarin*, far ahead. Then, already staggering below a press of sail, *Wingover* set more sail yet and flew to overhaul and catch her rival. She came up to her fast, while master and mates and men passed jokes amongst each other, and sped by her soon with all hands cheering and waving, and shouting taunts across the high white-crested noisy seas that drowned their voices.

FLYING-FISH, staring from out the open porthole of the steward's pantry, saw old Tasser there on *Mandarin's* poop, while *Mandarin* yawed with two men at her helm. Her topsails, though it was a somber evening, glowed and her long hull shone wet. A ruddy gleam lit up the sea astern of her like a long, cold trail of blood. In the far west the sky just over the horizon was the color of old blood, cold and irresolute,

It was a stormy, yet a strangely peaceful sky; as if the approaching night undetermined, day paused to watch what following night would do—whether to blow or be calm.

Wingover's master, signalling *Mandarin* in the half-light, taunted old Tasser. He asked, with fluttering signal flags—

"Who steered you to Melbourne?"

Tasser answered.

"I got rid of him, a flying-fish sailor."

As all the flags came waving down from the ship's mastheads and dusk set in, *Wingover's* master, looking down to the dark sea beside her, saw, while she rolled, his steward's eager face, framed in an open port below.

"Hey, you," he called, "come up on deck, here!"

The ruddy clouds had faded. Night had fallen, and far off astern the *Mandarin* lurched, a dim and ghostly shadow, leaping to the seas. Her side lights blinked, and Flying-Fish, seeing them as he came up to the deck, thought that they blinked to them.

"Did ye know *Mandarin*?" the master asked, and Flying Fish looked him in the eye proudly.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"Get to the helm. Let's see you steer then. East by north, now," said the master adding, "I'll show old Tasser how a fast ship flies."

He stared at the master and slowly shook his head.

"I am the steward, sir," he said.

In the dim gloom of newly fallen night his face looked obstinate, his large eyebrows meeting. Standing above the master there he looked an ominous man, with his great fingers twitching for the touch of *Mandarin*.

The mate of *Wingover* took out a teak pin from the taffrail.

"Get to that wheel," he said.

Flying-Fish looked for a moment backward over the sea where the low lights of *Mandarin* grew dim, then said again—

"I am the steward, sir."

The mate stepped up to him, the pin held in his face, while on the shadowy quarterdeck the sailors gathered, eager to see such fun. He heard their laughter there.

"Get to the wheel, now," said *Wingover's* master, and bade his mate, "Leave him to me, Mister."

There was a breathles silence then amongst the sailors, while from the western sea the sound of far-off wind came echoing.

Hearing those sounds, sounds of deep moaning far away, but coming quickly closer, the master turned to the mate again.

"Go get them 'gallants off her, Mister," he said, and as the mate ran, calling to the sailors, leapt to the Flying-Fish and smote his face with a flat hand.

"Get to the wheel," he ordered.

Swaying as the ship swayed, Flying-Fish kept his feet, and did not stagger. He stood, silent and still, only his tall form heeling from its upright posture with the low lurching of the ship. He seemed to peer downward, as if to see if it were really so, that some one had struck him, or if it was but the mad spray slap that his cheek had felt. Without a word the master smote him on the face again, again with a flat hand.

For a moment he seemed to struggle to restrain himself; then laughed, a quiet laugh, as if at memory of some old, long-forgotten joke. The master stood before him petrified, now suddenly aware that he was dealing with a man unlike all other men. He deemed the giant steward a lunatic and made a step toward the taffrail, meaning to reach a pin wherewith to defend himself; for that the Flying-Fish's laugh was but precursor of some action, the laugh itself gave warning.

Flying-Fish forestalled him. He took a single stride, with both his arms outstretched,

and ere the master knew his purpose, seized him. He clutched him with a vice-like grip, and the master, unable to lay hand upon a pin, strove to beat him with bare fists, but could not reach him.

Without a sound he raised the master from the deck, higher and higher, until he swung him free ,the master struggling all the while, but making no outcry.

Indistinct voices came from the sailors who, toiling aloft, gathered in sail. From the main deck the mate's voice called up to them, bidding them pass the gaskets tight. Then, drowning all voices, the advancing squall caught the ship and hid her in sleet. It beat in her wings and shrieked amidst her stays. She lay far down to lee, while a racing sea hissed past her. Thither Flying-Fish flung the master.

Alone upon the poop, he listened for a space. Then he tossed his apron off and kicked his feet free from their shoes. The squall was passing on. For one brief instant a red light blinked far astern, and then was lost. A moment more, and Flying-Fish was gone.

Coolly, as though it were from some green river bank he dived, he leapt from the taffrail.

At the same moment that he vanished a head arose from *Wingover's* lee chains. Bruised and sea-soaked, her master clambered up, out from the watery darkness down to lee where he had caught amidst the royal stays and gear. He grasped a pin, and went on silent feet to seek the Flying-Fish. But first a pistol.

Breasting the foamy seas, Flying-Fish looked from their high windy summits for the *Mandarin*. When he saw distant lights grow bright he shouted to her, and swam into her track. He heard, in fancy, old man Tasser say—

"Watch her, boy, steady!"

His lank hair clung about his brow and eyes so that he tossed his head like a black colt in rain.

Here and there a star shone, the clouds parting as the squall died down. Little gleams shot all along the sea. His pallid face was lit and, as he shouted, "*Mandarin*," she came toward him, galloping with her long bows adrip and all the leeches of her head sails wet. He saw the star shine glisten on her hull, saw the white looming of her towering topsails, and reached toward her as she came to him, his fingers all spread out to seize her martingale or dolphin striker.

Old Tasser stood upon her poop, beside the helmsman. Flying-Fish knew that and smiled, knowing how soon he'd hear old Tasser's, "Watch her, boy!"

Rising to a long roller *Mandarin* leapt high, so that he saw her every bobstay clear and every head sail's down-haul. She came direct toward him, so he ceased swimming and trod water with his hands upheld.

He shouted—

"*Mandarin!*"

The look-out man heard him from her forecastle head and, calling to her mate, ran aft, saying a man swam somewhere in the sea or ship's boats were adrift.

They laughed at him. They said—

"You hear the sea fowl."

The look-out man, supposing that he had dozed against the forecastle rail, went back to walk the forecastle head more wakefully.

While yet the Flying-Fish held his wide hands upreached he saw the *Mandarin* yaw, veering away from him; then struck out hard to reach her bow ere she could be gone by.

Missing her martingale a foot, he missed her low-dipped cathead too.

Swept past her cold iron side he clawed to find her drooping, lazy tack, and all the while called—

"*Mandarin, Mandarin.*"

Because the lee wash underneath her rail stifled his voice none heard him. A great wave raised him high so that, ere sinking again into the hollow to be once more close pressed against her, he saw the deck. As she rolled from him he called her name again, and heard old Tasser shout reply. Then he called louder. But the wave that had uplifted him dropped him now under the counter wash, fast swept toward her rudder.

Old Tasser on her poop said to his mate:

"I'd ha' sworn I heard a voice call from the sea. Did ye hear aught?"

The mate said—

"There are sea lions about, sir, and many sea fowl."

Tasser called—

"Steady that helm, there, you!"

And *Mandarin*, fighting her helmsman, flung her iron rudder sharp over, kicking hard, so that the helmsman said—

"She'd kill the man who'd steer her!"

While her wild shadow passed the Flying-Fish sank down, stunned by her rudder.

CONSCIENCE

by Harold Willard Gleason

THE Old Man's eyes were shifty blue;
The Second was a drunk;
The Third grew green the first day out
And never left his bunk!
I should of knowed, afore I signed,
The weather would be hard;
But no—until the Skipper hissed
"Jest two p'ints by the card!"

The fog hung gray as Doctor's stew;
The wind blew strong sou'east;
The *North Star* plodded through the chop
Like some great patient beast.
I had the wheel—'twas off Cape Fear,
The coast was scored and scarred—
Then "Steer no'thwest" his thin lips formed
"Jest two p'ints by the card!"

He slid below. I watched her sails,
Stained, patched and far from new;
I glimpsed her sturdy straining masts;
Her deck-beams, age-askew.
I saw her spray-lashed time-worn rails;
Her planking, staunch but scarred—
A grand old brig! I steered—no'theast—
Jest two p'ints by the card!

The Old Man cursed me up and down,
As when the weather cleared,
The *North Star* stood well out to sea,
Where I her course had steered.
I lost my berth—the paunchy scut
Who owned her took it hard—
Insurance—but *my* soul was clear!—
Jest two p'ints by the card!

As told to J. D. Sweeney, by Alfred P. De Shields

EDITOR'S NOTE—This is the personal narrative of one who claimed to have served under William Walker during his famous campaign in Nicaragua, as told by him to J. D. Sweeney, superintendent of public schools, Red Bluff, California. We believe it is what it purports to be, but such an addition to the scanty data on Walker is of such historical importance that its authenticity ought not to be conceded without a thorough examination of the case.

There is no least ground for doubting Mr. Sweeney's belief in its genuineness. The narrative itself in general tone and point of view is, so far as our editorial judgment can guide us, just such a story as might have been told by a man who in his youth had gone through such an experience. In checking its statements of fact and in investigating external sources of information we have uncovered nothing to prove that De Shields was not with Walker or that his account is not as accurate a record of events as could be expected of the average young man in his position.

The fact remains that we are unable to prove finally and conclusively that De Shields was with Walker and that his account of his experience is reliable at all points. That such proof would in any such case be extremely difficult to establish will be recognized by all of you who are familiar with the Walker case and realize how scant are the known records available as tests and checks.

We can say only that we believe De Shields was with Walker and gives at least a fairly accurate account of his experiences. The comparative lack of data on Walker, the historical importance of De Shields' narrative if genuine, and the lack of proof that it is not genuine seem ample warrant for publishing it, with a frank summary of the evidence thus far gathered. A fuller statement of that evidence will be found in Camp-Fire of this issue.

Another reason for publishing it is that by so doing it is brought to the attention of the general reading public and will undoubtedly elicit further testimony as to its genuineness and perhaps call forth some hitherto undiscovered data on Walker's expedition.—The Editors.

"A Recruit with Walker," copyright, 1925, by J. D. Sweeney.

LATE in the year 1856, in company with about one hundred and fifty other adventurous spirits, I left the city of New Orleans on steamer for Nicaragua, having had our passage free. We were on our way to join Walker and his army of filibusters as well as on the way to fame. The larger part of the number were very young men like myself, who was then but eighteen. In three days we reached San Juan del Sur, or Greytown, where we were transferred to a small stern-wheeler and soon proceeded up the San Juan River.

The San Juan was then a muddy stream about as wide as the Sacramento at Red Bluff and the banks were lined with huge alligators at which several of the boys took shots. But probably none of the brutes was injured, as the revolvers of that date would scarcely penetrate the thick hide of those lazy animals.

After reaching a few miles above the mouth of the stream, we were fascinated by the beauty of the scenery along the river. Monkeys swarmed in every tree, swinging from limb to limb by means of their tails; parrots and paroquets kept up an incessant and deafening chatter all day long. The verdure was most beautiful, especially upon the Costa Rica side; plantains, bananas and coconut trees lined the banks and, as night fell, these groves resounded with the hideous cries of the wild beasts. In midst of such a din, we stopped upon the Nicaragua side in order to go ashore and cook some supper.

And what a meal! It being my first experience in such a life, I shall never forget that supper. I truly felt as though my heart would break and the hot tears started to my eyes, but I soon regained control of my feelings and did as the others were doing—roasting a piece of salt pork on the end of the ramrod, and then munching it with a biscuit. Oh, what a mess we made of things! But it was nothing to what was to come later. Still, for a lad who had always had the best of all that was to be obtained on the old plantation in Louisiana and at the several schools which I had attended, this was a terrible ordeal.

The next morning we proceeded on our way up the river, landing at noon to go around Castillo Rapids to Fort Castillo on Lake Nicaragua, a distance of probably two miles. We did not stop at the fort, but took a lake steamer, a very good boat, having the old-fashioned walking beam much like those that then plied the Hudson. The lake at first sight appeared simply beautiful with the extinct volcano, Omatepa, standing almost in its center, and the many small islands scattered about covered with tropical trees, the great ugly alligators rolling in the water like so many canary logs, made the sight truly grand.

It did not take us long to make the run to Virgin Bay where we landed at a small wharf on which we dumped our baggage, which, by the way, we never saw after that hour. We went ashore and took possession of the town, which was not a hard matter as no men were to be seen and very few women. Some of these had small eating places where we could get a cup of coffee or chocolate, cake and beans or tortillas. At first sight we were shocked at the dress, or rather lack of dress on the part of these native ladies, for they wore but a gauzey waist with a quite short skirt of fairly good material, and wore but sandals upon the feet. After spending nearly a whole day in this little place watching the alligators, we again embarked for St. George, which was the headquarters of Walker and his three hundred men of the First Rifles and the Texas Rangers.

At last we were there, and the first thing to do in the way of work was to organize the new forces, which was soon done by forming two companies, A and B, commanded by Captain Course and Higley. I was assigned to Company A as a corporal and, as soon as we had completed our organization, we were given the name, "Second Rifle Battalion," after which we were dismissed for the day.

My father, a brother, and a cousin, Tom Basie, having preceded me to this land of adventure, my first object when left to myself was to look them up. I soon found my brother, who was lying on a bare floor with nothing but a beef hide under him, burning with a raging fever. As he saw me approach, he gasped—

"My God, have you come here to die also?"

I got him up and carried him to the quarters which had been assigned to me, where I made him a fairly comfortable bed upon a billiard table and got him something to eat, as he had not tasted anything for many hours. After a few days of careful

tending he got up on his feet and was able to tell me that father had gone to California and that Tom had been killed in battle at Granada.

Work began at an early date drilling the recruits. I was ordered to take a squad of soldiers to the plaza and show them the first principles of marching. This was nothing new to me as I had had military instructions at the National Military Institute at Brandywine Springs, Delaware, where we used the old flint lock musket, and also at the Naval Academy, Annapolis, where we had more modern weapons. On account of my proficiency I was promoted to first sergeant the very next day and was given charge of the drilling of the entire company, as there was scarcely an officer in the entire command who understood military tactics. It kept me upon the go from daylight till dark, and though it was hard work yet the men learned very quickly, as they were for the most part a very intelligent lot of men. Most of them hailed from Southern states and from California.

At this time quite a body of our men was shut up in Granada, as were also all of our artillery and munitions of war. So, in order to raise the siege, Walker, with all of the First Rifles and part of the Second, started, keen for the fray. They landed at night and took the enemy completely by surprize. With shouts and yells they charged the barricades and took one after another until they reached the plaza. No time was lost in getting every thing aboard of the steamer after taking care of the sick and wounded. As near as I can recall them the officers in this siege were Gen. Henningson, second in command, Col. Swingle in charge of ordnance, Col. Von Natzimer in charge of the commissary, Col. Rogers, Major Bell in command of the infantry, Col. Thompson adjutant, Col. Casey of the Texas Rangers, Dr. Cole, surgeon general, and Doctors Callahan and MacGonigle.

After resting the troops our army marched upon Rivas, which we found had been evacuated some days prior to our arrival. Only the women were to be found at home. Here we camped a couple of days, and here I was promoted to lieutenant and adjutant of the Second Rifles, with the additional duty of drilling all of the officers from captain down; so as long as there was no fighting going on I kept busy.

Suddenly General Walker took a notion to march to San Juan del Sur, which we reached after a march of a day and part of a night. I have never learned the object of this move. It was while wandering about this town that I first saw oysters in trees. This was readily explained when I was told that the high tide reached the lower branches of the trees along the shores and the oyster clung to the trees during low water.

ONE afternoon I was summoned to headquarters and commanded to take two deserters from an old hulk stranded upon the shore, and execute both. Just think that, to me, nothing but a boy, was this unpleasant duty assigned; but there was no way out of it, so I had to obey my orders. The fellows, who were Germans, had been informed that they would die at the set of sun, so I had but little time to get my squad ready for the work of death.

With a sergeant and twelve men, I went back of quarters and gave hasty instructions. The soldiers were to watch me and, when I raised my sword, aim was to be taken quietly, and at the drop of the sword they were to fire. I tried to do all as quietly as possible so that the poor fellows might not know the exact moment when they were to be sent into eternity.

As both were to be shot at the same time, I secretly instructed the sergeant to load all of the rifles, instead of half of them as is customary so that those who shoot may not know who killed the unfortunate. Two chairs were taken to the beach and placed close to each other for the prisoners to sit in. All was at last ready, for I did all this myself, not having a soul to assist.

Just as the last rays of the setting sun fell upon the scene, I marched my squad down to the old hulk, where the guard had charge of the prisoners. After I informed them of their doom, neither spoke a word and were led out to the chairs. Tying their hands behind them and blindfolding them, we seated them facing us. As I raised my sword every gun was leveled, and as I dropped my arm the entire number fired as one. Both the victims were killed and fell backward into the water. My men were quietly marched back to quarters.

During the entire scene the passengers of the California steamer which was lying in the bay were crying out to us to spare the

poor fellows. To tell the truth, I did not sleep much that night, though I was well tired out.

The next morning we started for Rivas. This is where Col. O'Neal met and defeated one thousand Costa Ricans with a force of about two hundred. The slaughter by O'Neal was frightful; no quarter was given and the pleas of the wounded were heart-rending. O'Neal was the dread of the Costa Ricans, as indeed he was of his own men, for if one of his followers hesitated to advance, he had no hesitancy in whipping out his revolver and shooting the man down as he would a dog. But he paid dearly for all this later.

On this march we were given nothing to eat, being expected to forage and get along as best we could upon plantains, bananas and other fruits, but we fared ill in this respect until near the end of this journey. Upon our arrival at headquarters I was given a good meal by my brother, who had it in readiness for me—beef stew, a lot of mangoes, with roasted plantains for bread. This was the first square meal I had had for so long that after eating I dropped over and went directly to sleep.

It was not long after this until I was ordered with the rest of my battalion to dislodge the enemy who occupied Obrija, a small town not far from our camp. After a march of three miles, we found, upon reaching the place, that it had been deserted by the foe upon our approach. We remained here for a couple of days and lived high upon young pigs which our "friends" had left for us in their haste to depart. Myself and the major stayed with the parish priest while here, and found him to be a very pleasant and sociable man. As neither of us spoke Spanish we had to hold all our conversation by signs.

In consideration of this hospitality on part of the *padre*, when we started to leave the major very thoughtfully took with him the horse belonging to the father. Later, when he was shot from this same horse, I fell heir to him. It was a welcome windfall as I was sorely in need of a mount.

For some time nothing was done except to scour the country for food. We were fast becoming veritable walking skeletons and disease was beginning to make ravishing inroads upon us. I had seen but one piece of white bread since my arrival, and it was a hard moldy biscuit. Plantains and tough beef formed our chief articles of diet. Many of the men would ask why we did not get out of the country. But this was practically impossible as we had no money in the first place, and then all avenues of escape were closed.

An incident occurred during this period of inactivity that added some excitement to the humdrum of our existence. The sergeant-major of our battalion took exception to something said by a corporal of the same troop, and issued a challenge to fight a duel. I was selected as second to the sergeant, and Capt. Blackburn was second for the other. The two of us held a consultation and decided that, as we could spare none of our force, the terms should

be ten paces with blank cartridges, hoping that after the first fire the principals would make up their differences.

But both meant blood and, as the word was given, two shots rang out simultaneously. As the smoke cleared away each stood upon tiptoe in expectancy of seeing the other lie dead. Seeing that no damage had been done, they threw away the pistols and went at each other rough and tumble. We let them hammer each other a while, but unfortunately for the sergeant his finger found its way into the mouth of his antagonist and the latter obligingly chewed

on it for a time until the owner cried, "Enough."

Neither Blackburn nor myself told of the joke on them by loading in blank, for had they found it out they would in all probability have killed the two of us.

This was not the only instance of dueling. In fact it became all too frequent and so many were being killed or maimed that Walker prohibited the practice. But while we had been idling away days, our enemies had been busy, and a union of all the Central American forces was planned. The number of available men under their immediate control was possibly five thousand against our six hundred, though we hoped for reinforcements from New Orleans and from California. But those who tried to reach us by way of the San Juan were driven back by the Costa Ricans who took possession of all the steamers and of Port Carlos thus getting entire control of the Lake region and cutting off all hope of help from the East.

In February, shortly after my nineteenth birthday, we began active preparation for the coming struggle. Our plan was to attack the strongholds at San George. I recall the time well, as Maj. Morris, my brother, and Louise, a native who cooked for us, duly celebrated my anniversary by a dinner of plantain, beef and mangoes.

Early in March, the First and Second Rifles started long before the break of day under command of Gen. Henningson. Arriving at the scene of action, we formed our line of battle in a deep cut in the road where we remained until the light of day enabled us to see. Why we did so, I never learned, as it would have been good strategy to have made an attack under the cover of the darkness. As it now was we were in full view of the enemy, who could watch our every movement from their watch tower in the steeple of the church in the plaza. The First Rifles lead the attack from the north side while the rest of us went from our original position.

Ere long the firing became general; we did not dare to try to storm the wall, which was six feet high, and we had no piece of artillery large enough to make a breach. After desultory fighting for some time, the enemy made a sally which we readily repulsed, but we did not follow them up, as we did not care to get within range of their old flint locks, for we had the advantage over them in arms and could afford to stand at a distance and get in deadly work with our superior guns.

Getting tired of this one-sided fighting, the enemy made a spirited charge, getting so far as to get mixed with our men, who were behind trees blazing away as rapidly as they could reload. Passing from one point to another, I heard a cry—

"Help! Help! I've got him."

Running in the direction of the shout, I found one of our privates, Hamilton by name, on the ground with a husky greaser on top of him. Hamilton had his legs over the back of his foe and his arms in a vise-like grip, and had the fellow sure enough, but was not able to get up. I tapped the poor fellow over the head with my pistol and he rolled over.

"Thanks, Adjutant, but I had him fast," said the doughty Hamilton.

While the latter had been firing from the shelter of an orange tree, the other crept up behind him when he had no load. Hamilton grappled with him but he proved too strong, and that was how he came to be in his predicament when I came along. Had I not happened there just then, no doubt the end would have been different as Hamilton was fast becoming exhausted.

This manner of battle was kept up most of the day, as we dared not to attack, owing to their greater numbers, and our hope was in wearing them out, for every time they made a sortie, we drove them back with heavy loss, for all of our men were dead shots, and we were protected by the brush. Neither side gave quarter, so those of our brave fellows who fell wounded were butchered when we drew off about three in the afternoon and returned to Rivas. Our coarse fare tasted splendid that night after a day without food.

AFTER this event we lay quiet for some time, loafing about camp and cursing the day that brought us into the country. There was a little insect about the size of the point of a pin, that would bury itself in the feet, especially under the toe-nails, where they would lay their eggs in a sac.

The sensation while they were at work was rather pleasant, but it was a delusion as when these eggs began to mature the pain was intense. It kept us busy removing these sacs, which was quite a task, for

if they were broken the eggs spread, and made quite a sore. Louise, our native woman, was an expert at removing the pest. She would prick all around the discolored part, and gently remove the sac without pain. We called these insects jiggers, the natives *neguas*, meaning black.

To help while away some of the monotonous time we would form parties of three or four and go forth after dark and crawl upon the sentinels of the enemy, who generally had a fire; there we would fire upon the guards who would fly to camp, alarm their whole force. The drums would beat, and bugles blow, as though we were right at their heels.

At last the troops were mustered in the plaza one evening and orders issued to make ready for another attack upon San George. That evening, I, with others of the officers, were invited to the wedding of Gen. Ned Saunders and Miss Swingle, daughter of Col. Swingle. Gen. Walker, being president of the republic, performed the ceremony. The bride, a pretty girl of eighteen, was neatly dressed in white, and the groom wore a black coat, but no vest. To make up for any deficiency he wore his sword, pistol and spurs.

Although there were several women in camp, none attended the ceremony. No one saluted the bride at close of the service, none smiled, all looked gloomy for wedding guests. The fact was, we were all wondering how many of us would be ready the following night to answer roll call. Almost silently we went out and dropped down to get some sleep, preparatory to the coming struggle.

All had orders to go on foot, even the Rangers; so, leaving all horses, we were on the move with Walker at the head long before day break. For the second time we formed our line of battle for the capture of San George. The order was given to charge, and with a yell we started for the wall on a run. A few clambered over, but came back about as fast, declaring that the foe was like a swarm of bees inside.

At dawn we fell back, firing in the meantime, they replying with considerable execution with their flint locks. I was sent with six or seven men to reconnoiter on the south side of the church. While returning from this scouting trip, Sergeant Unger was shot, and begged me to put him out of his misery. I did not do so, and some years later I met him in New York.

Our forces were now in full retreat. Though in good order, all were so disheartened after what they had undergone that not a word could be heard as we plodded along with heads hung, for it had been an awful fight and many of our brave comrades had gone down to death, with them some of our best officers, of the latter were Col. O'Neal and Capt. Blackburn. I fail to recall the names of any more now. The enemy again failed to follow up the advantage they had, and we were not molested on the retreat.

When we reached our quarters we found that the men who had been left in charge had not been idle but had strengthened the fortifications, barricaded all streets, and in every way made our position more tenable. Adobe walls, with portholes through which to fire, were the chief improvements. We felt much more secure from the attack which we were sure would follow, but it came not. We soon began to pay visits around, and on one of these rambles I visited the hospital, which was on an eminence near the city.

I made no more visits there, as the sights were too horrible for me. The poor sufferers were lying upon bare floors, some minus an arm, others with a leg missing, still more with feet swollen beyond natural size and eaten to the bone by the jiggers. A one-armed fellow acted as nurse. All were covered with vermin; in fact we all had a good sprinkling of the little gray pests, with no way of getting rid of them except to spread our clothes on ant hills. This was not a very practical thing as we had so few clothes that a complete change was not convenient. The hospital was guarded by Major Bell with what we jokingly termed the Jigger Battalion.

We still looked for the California reinforcements. In fact they had landed without our knowledge, though the Second and part of the First Rifles were to meet them halfway. When word reached us that they were waiting us, Gen. Ned Saunders started to meet them. But three of the entire troop were mounted, the general, the major and myself. My mount was a "son of a gun" mule which would do just as he pleased whenever he felt like it. So I let Capt. Conway ride and I walked. The captain was still lame from a wound

in our last battle. He got upon the mule all right, but I had to lead the brute by the bridle. After telling me of some of his experiences, the captain said—

"I have a presentiment that I can not get rid of, and that is that I will be killed."

Nothing any one could do or say would cheer him up.

The plains of Ajocoe, lay on our road, this was a strip of country about four miles long and two wide, it was perfectly devoid of bushes though several clumps of trees were scattered over the plain. Dense forests bounded both sides of this plain. Heavy undergrowth was a feature of these woods. The banian tree with its many limbs afforded good protection for a hidden foe. As we had started before daybreak we had gone quite a distance before the sun arose. Then we set out on a brisk walk in order to reach our destination while it was cool. We had about crossed the plain when a halt was called to rest. The major and I went into the woods to seek for some water, as all were growing quite thirsty for in that region the sun rises warm.

Scarcely had we entered the forest when we heard the crack of rifles behind us and realized that our company had been ambushed. We two rode back hurriedly and found the bullets flying thick and fast. My old mule seemed determined to desert to the foe, so I jumped off and started on a run to join Capt. Conway and his company. Upon reaching his side, I called—

"How goes it?"

He replied—

"All right; give them ——, boys."

Scarcely had he uttered the words when he staggered and groaned, "Oh, God!" and fell at my feet, shot through the heart.

Our men began to lose courage and the cry went up—

"They are using minnies."

This put them upon an equal footing with us in the matter of firearms, and they were making great execution upon our ranks. Prior to this time we had only to contend against old flint locks, thus having a big advantage.

All at once the firing of our right wing ceased, and we beheld our boys in a race for life. Soon it became a regular stampede.

When Conway fell, I assumed command of his company, as both of his lieutenants were also shot. I tried to rally the men, but it was of no use; so, like so many sheep, they took to their heels. All of this time the enemy was completely hidden in the dense woods, and scarcely a shot had been fired by our side.

Our mad race continued until we reached the opposite side of the plain, when the foe stopped firing on us. Our fellows were so badly scattered that it was hard to collect them, and harder to hold those whom we did round up. Gen. Saunders, Maj. Lewis and myself were the only officers to be found. After a time, finding that we were not being molested, we continued on our journey with the few men we had.

From time to time a fellow would drop out of a clump of bushes and fall into line with us, but all the spirit seemed to be gone from them, due to our being so badly whipped by those whom we considered our inferiors. Finding a pool of muddy water, we all fell upon our faces and drank long and deep, for we had not had a drink all day up to that time. We drank so much that we could scarcely breathe, for the dirty water tasted like a most delicious spring.

A short distance from headquarters, we were joined by reinforcements under Maj. Bell, but too late to give any material aid, as we were all cut to pieces. Our California friends, too, had taken a different route from that expected and so not only missed us but did not arrive at Rivas until late in the day. They were a fine lot of men; about seventy-five all told, under command of W. F. Stewart, and all full of hope, vigor and fight.

After the battle, which we always called Ajocte Race, I learned that two of the finest officers of my battalion had been slain, Conway, already mentioned, and Higley.

The next day, I went around interviewing the newcomers, and they wanted to know whether we had anything decent to eat in town, and when and where they might get it. I told them they would have to do as we did, rustle for themselves for what they could get. To this they merely replied—

"This is hell!"

One of the new arrivals whom I saw on this round was a lady, the wife of Maj. Dusenberry. She was domiciled in a neat adobe cottage. When I asked why she came to such a godforsaken land, the major said that the glowing description of the beauties of the country induced them to come; besides, he desired to see some

active service. To this I answered that he would be gratified as he would not have to wait long to see some fighting.

Sure enough, within a couple of days we were again preparing for the field.

Some of the artillery was moved to the plaza in charge of Capt. J. W. Severe. I do not recall how many guns he had, but they made quite a showing, and this alone put new spirit and vim into the men, particularly one Withers, whom I remember went about the camp singing good old Methodist hymns. I found out that at one time he had been a preacher, but left off because there was no money in the work, and took up the study of the "four kings," in which line he was also a failure.

So here he was with Walker where there was not a red cent in sight, but he seemed to be content and always came down the street singing at the top of his voice.

BEFORE the break of day we again reached the old field of San George for our third battle. I had charge of about fifteen men who acted as a bodyguard to the general, also as a support to the artillery, which we planted near a church, the latter to be used as a hospital. Soon the contest opened with spirit. The patches of plantain hid us from the view of the enemy, though they were little protection against the bullets, which cut through them like paper. During the firing the general walked up and down the plaza with his hands behind him, apparently perfectly unconcerned as to the situation, receiving reports as coolly as though nothing was going on. Wounded were being constantly brought to the church, but he paid no attention, not even raising his head, nor pausing in his moody walk. Stewart's new men, the Red Star Guard, were doing good work, as we could hear them cheering and keeping up a constant fire.

The artillery was active, but as far as could be ascertained was not doing much execution, for though we could hear the balls strike the barricades of the foe we could not see that the latter were either penetrated or razed. Even though had we had shells, I doubt whether it would have availed much, as our range was scarcely more than three hundred yards. About noon, Maj. Lewis came riding over the field with a rush, upon a horse he had taken from a priest, and, passing Walker, he cried—

"General, I am a dead man."

He rode into the church. This was a hard blow, as he was a noble soldier, and a perfect gentleman. I felt his loss very keenly, as he had been like a brother to me, giving me good advice, which as a boy I truly needed, and he did it in such a way that I could not take offense.

It was not long after this that our artillery ran out of ammuntion, and the guns were pulled back to Rivas by hand. As we had gained nothing by the fight of the entire day, we started back, little dreaming what awaited us. The general took the lead, and my charge walked about five or six paces in advance. Not a word had he spoken to me during the whole fight, not even to give an order. He was a very hard, cruel man, whose word was law, and none dared to dispute him. When he ordered a thing done, it must be done or death was the penalty.

At the left side of the road there stood a small house which was an excellent place for an ambush, and as we approached this house, a volley of shot met us. Turning to me, the general said—

"Take that house."

Up the bank we scrambled, and turned loose, and soon saw by the moon light a lot of fellows running away as fast as possible. It was but a short time before we realized that we were shut off from our headquarters, as firing began from all sides, though at long range.

As we approached a fork of the road where there stood a strong adobe, we were greeted by a heavy fire over our heads, indicating that the house was full. We found that they had made holes through the walls, which were over a foot thick, so that they were well protected. There happened to be a deep cut in the road near the foot of the little hill, on which the house stood; here I and my guard stopped. Here we were joined by Gen. Saunders, who was leading his horse. Walker and Col. Tucker started off to the left, and were soon lost to view in the plantains.

I ordered the boys to follow them, Saunders and I making up our minds to make a dash across the road under shelter of his horse. A tall young fellow, known as Andy, insisted upon remaining with us, so all three got behind the animal, gave him

a sharp cut with a whip, and at the same time cried—

"Go!"

Saunders, the horse and myself got across all right, but poor Andy lay in the middle of the road, dead.

My men, having gotten across safely, gave us a cheer, for we were a little slow, owing to the steed becoming fractious in the middle of the road. These men, not having taken part in the day's fight, were comparatively fresh, as were some who met us now from town, under Col. Rodgers. All these were full of fight. Rodgers wanted to know who had charge. I told him that I had.

"Well, let us charge on that house," said he.

I said that I was ready.

"Why don't you charge then?" said he.

"As soon as you lead we will all follow," said I.

"I do not think we can take it, anyway," he said, and started down the road, all of his valor evaporating.

I and my men must have been the last on the scene, as I failed to see any others, and how they all disappeared has always been a mystery. I thought of the poor fellows we had left in the hospital on the battle ground and wondered what would become of them. Would they be butchered, or taken care of?

Our two surgeons, Callahan and MacGonigle, were there. The latter was not much use as a doctor, for when there was a fight he was sure to take a hand, regardless of his duty as a surgeon. I had seen him come from the front with his shirt cut from shoulder to shoulder and when I asked him what was the matter, he simply replied that it was only a flesh wound.

When at last I reached camp, everybody was busy manning the works, as they expected to be attacked any moment, but they had had enough for one day, and so gave us a much-needed rest. I had a good supper of stewed mangoes, some meat, a roasted plantain and a cup of chocolate, and then went to bed.

I arose early and went out to the barricades to arouse the men so that we would be ready to repel an attack. As I went toward the plaza, one of the men told me that all of the Red Stars had deserted during the night and had gone over to the enemy with the exception of Capt. Stewart. This was a sad blow to us, for the loss of so many men was serious. I never dreamed that such a fine lot of men had so little principle, especially after the good record they had made during the fight. We had all been loud in their praise, and now—

But they swore they could not fight without something to eat, and so intended to go where they could get it. Strange as it may seem, their desertion had no effect upon the old men, who clearly did not intend to do likewise and leave their sick and wounded comrades to the mercy of the foe.

I went to the headquarters of Gen. Saunders to see how it fared with our major and found him upon his back on a billiard table, where Saunders was trying to care for him. One could readily see that he was fast dying as every time he drew a breath the blood would start from the wound, which was just above his heart.

That same afternoon, I was ordered to take a firing squad and place it in charge of Dr. Callahan. I went inside to speak to the latter, and was surprized to find a lot of the men around a rude coffin chanting. This I found was the funeral service of the Masonic order, and was the first time I ever witnessed such a ceremony. The pall-bearers were all members of the order, and they preceded me and my squad to the grave where they went through more of their service, throwing green brands into the grave as it was lowered. The grave was filled by the participants and a salute fired over the last resting place of the soldier brother.

Our battalion was placed in charge of Maj. Horace Bell, who was a comparatively strange man to us. During this entire afternoon the enemy were busy, and we could hear them felling trees for barricades and by night fall they had us completely surrounded. Our condition was deplorable. God alone knew what would come to us. A depleted and defeated company, cut off from all supplies, and very little on hand, and that miserable enough. We could get some plantains and mangoes when the enemy gave us a chance.

All that night we could hear the foe hard at work; some of their works were not more than two hundred and fifty yards from the plaza where we were, and some were even closer. All this was permitted to be done without a shot from our side.

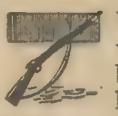
However, when they had completed their defenses they began to show themselves and our boys got a chance to pick off a few of them. Our object was to permit them to complete their works and then we would demolish the same with our artillery, of which we still had considerable. This, if it were the idea of our leaders, proved to be a delusion, for the hard woods—mahogany and *lignum vitae*—were too hard for the round shot which we poured into them. We could see the cannon balls strike, but do very little damage. The roar of the guns was proably more effective than the shot.

Our fellows would stick a hat on the end of a bayonet and raise it just above the breastworks, when a score of heads would pop up to take a shot at what they supposed was the head of an American. Poor fellows! They no sooner appeared than our men who were dead shots, made short work of them, and they soon dropped to our game.

One remarkable thing about their shooting was that it was always so high, seldom even striking our fort, it was also very much at random, and so wasted, whereas we never lost a shot. Then most of them had old flintlocks, the Costa Ricans seeming to be the only ones who had minnie rifles.

On a hill the enemy had erected a fairly substantial fort, from which we could see the muzzle of a large cannon protruding, but which so far they had not used. In other words, we were now in a complete state of seige. Ten days after we were hemmed in a flag of truce was hoisted by the Costa Ricans, and a delegation was sent to meet theirs midway between the two camps for a parley. The object was to send out all noncombatants, the next day, they to have a conveyance for our use on neutral ground. Four of our men went out and brought back two wagons as being ample for the women.

At the plaza the few belongings were loaded on and the women, in best dress, were soon ready to leave. Among these I now recall the names of Mrs. General Saunders, the wife of Adj. Gen. Thompson, Mrs. Col. Swingle, Mrs. Duzzenbury—her husband had been killed in our last fight—and Louise. But one remained, she was Dolores, a native, who was caring for Maj. Delaney and could not be induced to leave him in his wounded condition.



WE REALIZED that now there was going to be something doing before long, as soon as the ladies had gone, and so we remained close to our works. We could note that there was considerable activity in the camp of the enemy, especially when we climbed to the steeples of the churches. I told my men to get all the spare guns they could, so they got a number of Mississippi rifles as they did not become foul as fast as the minnie rifles, had less recoil and were more accurate at short range.

We managed to have one or two extra guns each. My barricade was directly in front of Walker's quarters—a row of adobe houses, into which I could fall back in case of necessity. I had every man at his post, as we were sure that an assault would be made that night before the break of day. In this we were not disappointed, for about an hour before the dawn we could hear them moving. Our nerves were at full tension, I had warned my corps not to fire until they came close to our position. It was a very odd sensation, waiting there not knowing how many were coming, and we waited in suspense until we felt that they must be not more than fifty yards away, when we opened fire.

On they came with a yell, and here is where our extra guns came into fine play, for before they realized it we had poured our second volley into their ranks, and they came to a stand and began to fall back a short distance. As it was now growing lighter, we could discern them in the distance, and our fire became most deadly and almost every shot took effect. This continuous fire we kept up as fast as we could reload, and soon saw that they were wavering, and then I leaped upon our barricade, my brother at my side, and gave the order to charge.

With as loud a whoop as they could give, our fellows started but the others did not wait for us to come up with them, but began to run like wild sheep. They outnumbered us three to one. They did not even look back to see if they could check us, but, throwing away their guns, they got off as fast as they could, we keeping up our fire all the time as long as there was one of them in sight.

Suddenly I was alarmed at hearing shots behind me, and found that it was Col. Casey, who was shooting their wounded

with his pistol. He had lost an arm in an earlier fight and had sworn to kill every greaser he could lay his hands on. We found over one hundred dead in front of our works and there is no telling how many got off wounded. We had made good calculation of their distance, for we found that our first fire had mowed them down in a row not over twenty feet from our works. Those who made the main attack were Guatemalans, as we found when we came to those who were still alive. The poor beggars begged for life, saying—

"*No me matas, señor, sayde, Guatemala.*" This in most pitiful voice.

Some of our boys could understand what they said, but it was all Greek to me, "Guatemala" being all that I comprehended. I had not then been long enough in the country to learn Spanish; in fact there was no one to teach except the two women we had in camp.

We were forced to leave the dead lying on the ground as we were within range of the guns of the enemy and did not dare to risk going out. Our loss in this engagement was five, all shot in the head, that being the only part of the body exposed. That more were not killed was due largely to the fact that these people shot high.

During this whole affair no one saw Major Bell, who did not appear. After the fight I had to make out my report to him and was put to considerable trouble, going from place to place trying to locate him. Finally I located him in bed safe between the walls.

We thought we had put a quietus on the opposing forces, but they continued to keep up a fire from their cannon back of the San Francisco church. This, however, was the only piece for which we had any real respect. For some time we had to be careful when on the streets, as minnie balls were sure to fly about one, although I do not now recall their having hit any one.

Our stock of plantains having been exhausted, mule and horse meat was the chief article of our diet. We were even out of bread. At night the fellows who had turned traitor would come outside the camp and sing out—

"Come over, boys, there is plenty to eat here and they will treat you well."

Very few accepted this as we all felt that we must remain with our wounded comrades whatever came.

The stench from the dead outside became almost unbearable. Buzzards did their best to aid us, but they had a big job. We began, too, to notice that the Costa Ricans were getting busy again and that they evidently meant to make a second attempt to dislodge us, as they no doubt thought we were weakened from lack of food. This was largely true as food was the main topic of conversation with our boys.

As everything was in readiness for the reception of the foe, all that we had to do was to keep close to our works and keep a sharp lookout as we feared they might make an attack upon us early in the evening. This would be a great disadvantage to us as we were outnumbered about ten to one. In fact, had they had the courage to do so they could have crawled over our works and tied us all up hand and foot, but they had great respect for our fighting abilities and so waited until a better time. Sure enough, about three in the morning we heard the buzzards flying out of their roosts as though being disturbed by something, which we soon made out to be our foe advancing at a rapid rate.

When they neared our position they opened fire, but we were ready for them and fired volley after volley, picking up piece after piece as rapidly as possible, which made them believe there were more of us than there really were. They fell back despite the angry efforts of their officers to get them to charge again, while we stood hurling yells of defiance at them in the dawn. All this spare time we were rapidly reloading all of our guns, as we felt sure they would be at us again.

Here they came with a rush. We withheld our fire until they were right upon us so that we would lose no shot—then we let them have it hot and heavy, and none too soon, as some had climbed upon the works and were given the bayonet. For a time it appeared as though we were lost, but just as we thought of falling back to the adobe house in the rear, their courage gave out and they broke and ran. Not knowing what might next happen, I sent word to Captain Severe to send us a howitzer as soon as he could. He responded at once, and none too early, for here came the enemy.

But the captain got his gun placed on an eminence behind us and, as they fired their first volley in the dark, he surprized them

by hurling a charge of cannister into their midst. This had a startling effect, as they were not aware of his presence, so away they fled to the brush again.

Captain Severe kept up his firing until daybreak. Then we could see men here and there behind hummocks, and every little while one would get up and run, but the poor fellows scarcely showed their heads before we had sent a bullet through them. This was great sport for our thoughtless fellows.

The house which I had occupied before the siege had walls of reeds, plastered over, the walls being about four inches thick. This house was not more than a couple of hundred yards from us and some of the Costa Ricans had taken position in it and kept shooting too close to our heads for comfort, so myself and brother took a couple of minnie rifles, which were a hard-shooting gun, but not a favorite with the soldiers, as they made our arms sore, they being already blue from the use of the Mississippi rifles. But the fellows had to be dislodged, and within a few minutes the house was vacated. We could still hear firing in the direction of the plaza and knew that the battle was not all over.

Soon a man came to me with the word that the plaza was captured. I requested him not to let the men know, and as a matter of fact the report was but partly true, as but a few buildings on one side had been taken. Our men made a rush to the rear of these buildings and succeeded in recapturing the houses and about fifty of the enemy who were lying flat on their stomachs trying to dodge the balls from the big guns.

This was a lucky stroke, for had the plaza been taken it would have been all up with us. About noon the firing ceased, as the opposing force fell back to dine, while we poor devils had to be content with a bit of mule steak without salt, that commodity having given out days before.

Our total loss in this engagement was between twenty and thirty, while the number killed on the other side was much greater, the grounds being strewn with bodies as far as we could see. I went over to my house to see what our charge with the minnies had done, and when I pushed open the narrow door, a horrible sight greeted me, for there were at least a dozen poor fellows lying dead. At the time I was quite elated over the slaughter we had effected, as it was a good lesson to the enemy.

We were now quite desperate, and cared little for life, as we felt that it would not be long before the hordes of natives would surround us and put us to the bayonet. During this lull Major Bell rode out of our camp toward that of our opponents; being an officer in high standing none of us ever thought of his deserting to the foe, but he never came back, showing that he had a black, cowardly heart. He afterward became a respectable(?) citizen of Los Angeles.

He was roundly cursed by all for his dastardly trick, showing that despite his rank he was devoid of principle. Another sad event that marred our condition was a duel between Capt. Mills and Lieut. Payne. As far as could be learned they had a quarrel about the skinning of a cat which they intended to eat; the lie was passed, a challenge given to fight, and with seconds they went at once to an open, took position twenty paces apart and at the word fired. Mills fell dead, while Payne escaped with a slight grazing of the head. Both had been fast friends, so naturally this episode cast a gloom over our men.

FOR days we lived this monotonous life. Frequently a stray shot from a cannon would come our way, and once as I was sitting on a low wall, chatting, such a ball came rolling slowly along. I stuck out my foot, but luckily did not get it in the way, for had I done so it would surely have taken the foot off, as it buried itself in the wall near-by. At one time Capt. Mann, a fine looking fellow, tried to catch a similar ball and it struck him in the breast and killed him instantly.

Our boys prepared an effigy and lifted it above the wall, to draw the fire of the foe so we could locate them. Our ruse was successful and our ragman was soon pierced with many a bullet before they found out the trick, in the meantime our sharpshooters in the steeple picked off several of their men when they would shoot. All of this was done in a sort of listless way by the men, who were slowly starving, and who felt that it would be but a matter of a short time until it would be all over with them.

During this time Capt. Tom Farrell proposed to me that with a few more we slip out to a plantain field near-by and bring back all we could carry. As that would

mean bread, I accepted. Early in the morning we started, seven or eight of us, and slipped out without being seen. We soon reached the patch and gormandized on the luscious fruit. I had put a couple of big ones inside of my shirt and was pulling more when we were discovered and fired upon.

Capt. Farrell, who was near, said—

"Let us get out of this."

We started on a dead run for the camp, and as I knew of a sort of ditch leading toward the town, we made for it, all the time the bullets popping about our heads.

We had not fired a shot, as we could see nothing that we might shoot at. Just as I gained the road, a big greaser jumped into the middle of it yelling—

"—— *filibustero*." We both raised our guns at the same time, fired, and both were unharmed though not over fifty feet apart. We began to load as rapidly as we could, and I felt that now I would have the advantage for he would have to cock his flint lock, take out the stopper of his powder horn, prime and shut the pan, while all that I had to do was to get the cartridge down and put on a cap.

To my horror, as I rammed the charge home, I found that the gun had missed fire and now I had a double charge. I trusted to luck and pulled the trigger; off she went, and down fell the fellow with a hole through him nearly large enough to put a hat through. All this time Farrell was calling to me to use my six-shooter, but in my excitement I did not hear him. He had not been able to help, as he had just shot a man behind me.

I reached the ditch and started again on the run when I heard a voice calling me not to leave him for God's sake. It was a boy named Hook, who was lying within five feet of me. I told him to get upon my back and hold his head down and I would carry him as far as I could. I got him nearly to the end of the ditch when we were met by friends and I set him down. He was delighted to find that he could walk, as he had received but a small buckshot in his rear.

I had succeeded in bringing in the plantains, and gave them to my brother who was glad thereat, as they had killed a dog and with the plantains could make a capital stew, as green peppers were plentiful. That evening we invited several friends to the spread and had the best meal we had had for many days.

We could not get out of our position, as we had no place to go, so we eked out an existence, until we were down to our last mule. Then one day, a fine steer leaped over our breastworks, and started to run across the plaza, but a dozen bullets soon stopped his career. We looked upon this as a good omen, and sure enough it proved to be, as four days later a flag of truce was raised over the intrenchments of the enemy. A parley was held and soon three persons appeared and were led blindfolded to General Walker's headquarters. One of the trio was a naval officer in the uniform of the United States.

The three remained in conference for some time and then returned in the same manner in which they came. Something we knew was about to happen, and that we believed to our advantage. This much we learned: The American officer was Captain Davis of the United States Sloop-of-war *St. Mary* stationed at San Jaun del Sur, so we knew now that we would have protection and that Uncle Sam had interfered in our behalf.

Much talk and surmising was done by the men. Some had an idea that we would be turned over to the "allies" as prisoners-of-war, and would probably be kept by them for an indefinite period. However, it was not long until we were out of our suspense.

All this happened in the month of May, and it was now nearly forty days since the siege had begun. Starving as we were, we preferred fighting on rather than be taken by an enemy from whom we could expect nothing but the harshest of treatment. The next morning at ten o'clock the white flag was unfurled to the breezes, we presumed that the envoys had completed their work and that we should soon know our fate, when they had signed the articles. Soon the three envoys came from their place of meeting without the blindfolds on so apparently all had been arranged. They passed on through the street to the exit, and still we knew nothing in relation to the surrender, for surrender we were positive would be the case.

That same afternoon orders were given to march to the plaza and form a square. As soon as the formation was completed, which was not long, as there were not more than four hundred men, General Walker

and his aide made their appearance. A speech was made by Walker, the contents of which I remember very little.

There was one thing I recall very distinctly, however, and that was that he blamed everybody but himself for our disaster and loss of the country. The men cursed him in their hearts, for it was through his mismanagement and incompetency that we had lost all for which we had fought so hard.

One would think that the men would have given their commander-in-chief a cheer at the conclusion of his speech, but nothing of the kind. Every one kept a dogged silence, and as he went out none even saluted him.

In a short time the enemy soldiers surrounded us four deep, our officers were allowed to retain their side-arms, while the others laid their arms upon the ground. We were then told to break ranks, the enemy opened their square and we were allowed to move out. People came from all directions, and soon the streets were crowded with soldiers and women. The latter had their cooking utensils with them and were soon ready to serve us a meal if we had the price.

Fortunately for me, an officer purchased my sword and pistol, so I could eat all I wanted to. For a real you could get a good meal of rice and stewed meat. My brother and myself were at the dishes as fast as we could swallow, and after eating our fill we went to sleep in short order. Within a short space of time we were as hungry as ever.

The troops collected us all in the plaza of San Francisco and placed a heavy guard over us, and we were told that in the morning we would be started on our journey. Those who wished to go to California would leave by way of San Juan del Sur, while the sick and others, together with the wounded, would go east by way of San Juan del Norte—now called Greytown. An American officer was to accompany each party under the protection of the flag of the United States; provisions were to be furnished us long the road.

The California party made an early start for Virgin Bay, where we were taken charge of by Lieutenant McCorkle, but we were told that we would have to march to the Gulf of Nicoya, Costa Rica, as it was not possible to get transportation from San Juan. There was a lot of growling on our part as it meant a march of over a hundred miles instead of twelve, and that was hard on some who were barefooted and upon those whose feet were badly eaten by jiggers.

At last we were taken upon a steamer which plies the lake and so were taken to a solitary hut near shore where we disembarked and began our long march. Lieutenant McCorkle was here furnished with a horse and a servant who also acted as flag-bearer. It seemed rather odd and funny to us to see a sandal-footed greaser carrying the Stars and Stripes.

After a tedious tramp of several days we reached a place called the *embarcadero* where there were several "bungoes" waiting to transport us to our destination. After rowing for several hours we came to the town for which we had started. It had five or six hundred inhabitants and was situated upon a peninsula; not more than a hundred yards wide. We were assigned to quarters in a long two-storied frame building which had been used as a custom house in former days. It was bare but comfortable as we were sheltered from wind and sun.

Our rations, consisting of coffee, sugar, jerked beef and a plantain, were issued once a day. Those of us who had money bought whatever else they wanted, but money was very scarce with us. For a while we got along fairly well, but it was not long before they began to cut down our allowance until we had nothing but jerked beef and plantains.

Conditions grew worse and worse daily. Lt. McCorkle was duly notified of our treatment, but we got no satisfaction from him as he was either helpless or indifferent to the situation. As a last resort a committee was appointed to wait upon the *alcalde* and see what could be done with him. Through an interpreter, he gave us to understand that he was doing his best and that he was following his instructions.

We then told them that as a matter of self-protection we would be forced to go to the market place and help ourselves, that we would do it in an orderly manner if not interfered with, but in case objections were made we would resort to force, and since we numbered over one hundred men we could soon capture the troop of twenty-five soldiers who were detailed to guard us.

Within a few minutes a cart load of truck was sent to us and we had no more trouble

about provisions while we remained there.

The question bothering us during this time was how we were going to get out of the country and where we would be sent. A bark of some five hundred tons was lying in the harbor at anchor. It was called the *Juan Rafael Mora*, and we soon understood that they were negotiating with her officers to take us all to Panama, at which place we could find passage to San Francisco.

But here we were again deluded, for after landing at Panama we were marched into the depot under a heavy guard of native troops and then started on our way across the Isthmus on flat cars. The heat of the sun was fearful and we did not have a drop of water to drink, so we were almost famished when we reached Aspinwall—now Colon. Here we had a surprize in the form of United States Marines lined up on both sides of the car as we landed. They took us in charge and took us to the wharf, where there were several cutters and launches manned by bluejackets ready to take us to the United States, by way of the U. S. Frigate *Roanoke*.

Once on board, we felt happy to think that all our troubles were over and that before long we would be back in our own country even if we were to be taken to New York instead of San Francisco. Our first act upon reaching the frigate was to have a hair-cut, a bath, and a rub with lice exterminator, after which we were marched upon deck and given a hearty American meal.

The midshipman happened to be a classmate of mine at the Naval Academy at Annapolis, so I was treated by all in royal style, being taken below at once for a glass of grog with him and his fellows. They all contributed to make me look respectable, so I was soon rigged out in good shape and my old duds were thrown out of a porthole.

As a matter of course we slept but little that first night. I was introduced to the higher officers who treated me with great kindness, the executive officer giving me permission to visit the town as I chose. I did not avail myself of this privilege, however, but two or three times as there were no allurements for me on shore.

After a pleasant voyage of several days, for it then took a sailing vessel much longer than it now takes a steamer, and our navy then was composed of all windjammers, we reached America. Once in the Hudson river, and the mud-hook good and fast at the bottom, sails all furled, and salutes fired, the cutters and launches were "piped away" and the last of the greatest of filibustering expeditions on the American continent came to a close. I landed at Castle Garden without a cent and we were all turned loose in the city of New York to hustle for ourselves.

NOTE—I have tried in writing this story to give as true an account of events as I remember them, a great many incidents may have escaped my memory. It is a long time to think back to the latter part of December, 1856, on to the middle of July, 1857, when all these incidents took place, and I am positive that they have never been touched upon by any one.

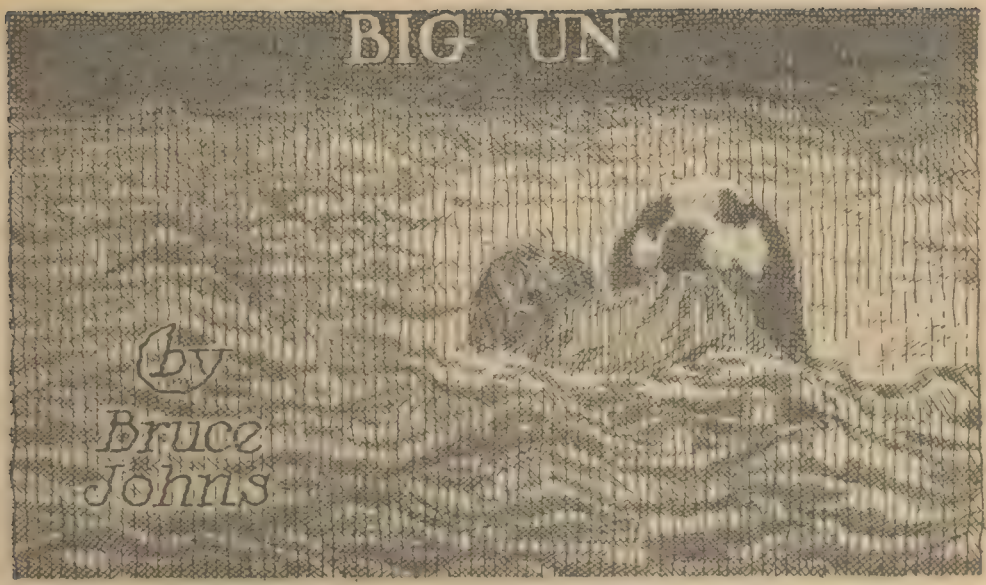
ALFRED P. DE SHIELDS,
Adjutant of the Second Rifle
Battalion, Nicaraguan Army.

To J. D. SWEENEY—This scroll I submit to your perusal to do with as you choose. It would never have been written only at your request. If you can make a story out of the above facts, I wish you success. Hence I make you a present of this endeavor to please you. Truly yours,

ALF. DE SHIELDS.

NOTE—San George, the town on the western boundary of the lake, should be written San Jorge, which is the same. We called it the former name as we had no knowledge of Spanish. A. DE S.

P. S.—Please return the original to Mrs. De Shields when you are thoroughly done with it.



Author of "The Valley of Remorse," "The Fox of St. John's," etc.

OLD MAN TIBBY, half Indian and half crazy, so the villagers said, was viewing the litter with a judicial and liquor-saddened eye. He teetered his rickety body over the box in the rear of Felix Jim Andersen's wool socks, boots, candy, raincoats and canned goods store.

"Mebbe get rid o' cupple, uh?" he muttered.

He gripped a big pup in his bony hands and swayed upright again.

"Um-m!" he murmured in surprize. "Big 'un!"

Felix Jim, standing spread-legged beside the old man, towered his six-feet-four-inches over the box and gave a critical eye to the worried mother's brood.

Andersen's great head, with its mop of whitening yellow hair, nodded solemnly as the half-breed turned the pup over for inspection. Tibby's dirty fingers pressed into the young dog's thighs, and the grocer scowled. He had lived so long among the Indians at Plateau Requa that he had become one in speech.

"Put um down."

Tibby obeyed.

"Big 'un eat lakk wuulf," essayed Tibby. "I takk um fer you. No pay um."

"Guess nit," snapped Felix Jim. "Yas, you take um, an' eat um. Nawthin' doin'. I keep thata one. Sell the others, all of them. Now get movin' 'long. You don't get no dawg o' mine, Tibby."

Old man Tibby moved away. There was no use to argue with Felix Jim.

And so Big 'Un, as he suddenly became known, stayed with Andersen. His three brothers and sisters were crated and went down on the weekly stage to Eureka where they went into other hands—and out of the story. The mother dog went with them.

Playing in the warm sand at the mouth of the Klamath River and later sporting like a young dolphin in the surf, Big 'Un grew up to carry out his name. He was a Newfoundland, more or less, a husky, black, curly creature, all mouth, who ate every day in the year like a bear on his first day of spring. Behind that big mouth was a big bulge that supported more than the shaggy mop of hair and two, long, tattered ears. He had brains.

He knew his A, B, C's of the dog language long before he devoured Jim's fourth pair of rubber boots and, although he ate water snakes, rats and aged, fly-smitten salmon upon occasion, he was a gentle and lovable fellow who also devoured affection. White children, few and twenty miles apart in that Klamath country of California, were his special delight. Indian children? One eye asleep, the other awake when they were around, and a quick curl of the lip that took the bravery out of the young braves.

Pigeon Joe of the Culote gang out of Bleacher's Meadows gave the Big 'Un his first and last kick in the ribs. Joe wore a dirty rag on the fatter part of his calf for three weeks, and there was in addition a black eye and a cut lip that Felix Jim had added in the general brawl the followed on the pier.

There was no stopping Felix when he was angry, and the words he gave the rapidly departing Joe went for every Indian in the district. So Andersen announced. Big 'Un sided with his master whole-heartedly. Felix Jim calmed down, but never the Big 'Un.

Indians were the bane of Felix Jim's life. They snitched cookies from the barrel, a potato now and then, often a can of beef, all of which cost money and cut the meager profit Jim was able to squeeze out of his store.

The storm that grew out of the incident builded itself into a typhoon, as is the habit in tiny towns in upper California where the backwoods meet the ocean. The Indians planned things against Felix Jim's store—raids, burnings, shootings—and then went to sleep on the warm sand at the river's mouth. Felix heard the mutterings and threw the redskin kids, clad only in a shirt, into the street when they came to snitch.

Old Man Tibby joined the insurrection of angry words. He had a son. He had fifteen of them, but this one in particular was the cleverest snitcher of the tribe. He was a handsome child, a bronze god, a Hermes with a ragged shirt refusing to meet his middle. When Biddle Boy—that was his tribal name—pattered into the store to look at the picture of Buffalo Bill on the cartridge poster, he stood with his beautiful face aglow before the white-haired old man like a hero-worshipping schoolboy and, his hands behind him gripped a prune or two from the slant-wise box. He turned his hands like a magician hiding a playing card as he went out. If Felix jumped fast he lost the prune just the same as it went into the boy's mouth in a flash and was too badly twisted to be taken out and sold ever again.

But Biddle Boy was rather a favorite of Jim's after all. It was true that he had received his full share of kicks with hob-nailed shoes just below that flying shirt tail, but it was just as true that Jim had given him a First Reader which, in time, Biddle Boy's mother used to kindle the family fire.

"Gonna mak guy outa thata boy," threatened Andersen one day. "Gonna learn 'im to read an' talk like me, som' day when he ain't so —— fresh."

But Biddle Boy cared not for learning. Rather a dive into the salty mouth waters of the Klamath and an arise from the treacherous sands below with an eel squirming around his wrist and a cry of exultation on his full red lips. There was sleeping and dreaming to be done when the soft trade winds lulled the breakers around the corner of the bar. A soft bed of seaweed, akimbo arms for pillows. Ambitionless happiness.

Some five miles away squatted a nondescript school with a baggy-trousered, tousel-headed master, who was deeper in an invention to dispel fog than in his arithmetic. It had no truant officer, of course.

SLEEPING inside the curve of the boy's lovely body lay Binjo, an epitome of everything the Biddle Boy was not. Unlikes attract, 'tis true. Binjo was yaller, both in and out, afraid of what little shadow he cast, afraid of the water, slinking at the heels of his bravely striding master when any dog his size ventured too closely.

Biddle Boy kicked Binjo about considerably, but that is the temperament of an Indian lad. Binjo cried and huddled and sought comfort under the boy's feet. He had one trick. That was snitching cookies from Felix Jim's.

One can only surmise that Biddle Boy taught Binjo his one trick. At least the dog was often successful when the boy failed. He had an ingratiating, uplifted-eye manner when he looked longingly into the door of the store, and his little pink nostrils quivered in the most sensuous manner at the smell of the sawdust floor.

It took Big 'Un just one look at Binjo to know he didn't rate very highly in the social scale of doggery. He didn't give him a second look for a long time and that was why Binjo was able to commit his first robbery.

Binjo got used to Big 'Un refusing to look at him and realized on it. After the twenty-fifth passing of the store and Big 'Un had failed to see him, he slipped in and got a cookie. He was so small that Felix Jim didn't see him among the boxes. He did see him going out, however, and his wrath was great against the silent guardian of the door.

Jim slapped Big 'Un along the rump, and Big 'Un took it as a personal affront from Binjo for some reason or other. He was so startled at the slap from his beloved god that he failed to chase the mongrel.

But when he saw him again—three days later, it was—he remembered only too well, and chased Binjo to the beach and there cornered him at the water's edge. He gave him a tremendous shaking. Biddle Boy attempted a half-hearted defense of his dog with the aid of a rock so well-aimed that Big 'Un took it on the flank.

Biddle Boy appeared angry and Big 'Un was, and while Binjo fled to a dory grounded in the sand, the two of them went at it. Big 'Un charged straight for the legs before the boy could find another boy-sized rock and the dog left his fang impressions in Biddle Boy's heels as the youngster shot his slim body like an arrow into the river. Big 'Un kept Biddle Boy in the water until he nearly froze to death then, without a look toward the cowering Binjo, he went back to the store.

After that it became a game with the zest of revenge in victory. Time after time Big 'Un caught the little 'un and gave him the shaking of his life. Biddle Boy took his defeat at the beach and the sore leg with the phlegmatic temperament of his race of clam-diggers, carrying only the desire to reap some sort of payment by overcoming Big 'Un's guard.

A campaign developed with Binjo and Biddle Boy pitted against the big dog. Big 'Un guarded well but when the sun was warm and the blue bottles buzzed in the store windows he was likely to let the drowsiness of the atmosphere get the better of him. It was then the snitchers crept up to view Buffalo Bill on the cartridge advertisement and leave with something in the grimy hands of the boy and in the tight little mouth of Binjo.

Felix looked on and grunted his disgust.

"Say, you boy," he said one day when he cornered Biddle Boy near the door, "I got good mind to slap you one in kisser. I have, by gollies, I have."

Biddle Boy couldn't answer back. To do so would have betrayed his mouthful of prunes.

"You kinda wise guy kid at that," went on Jim. "By gollies, ol' batch'ler like me ain't got no kid. Wisht you was mine som'time, mebbe. I betcha make um man outa you."

Felix Jim Andersen wrinkled his walrus face in a shame-faced grin, lifted the boy by the shoulder of his shirt and threw him, not unkindly, into the dusty road.

Big 'Un, at the capture, had cornered Binjo and was shaking him like a gopher. The little fellow landed at the sprawled heels of his master. They arose without a backward glance and trotted away, Binjo whining about the loss of a cracker hurled from his mouth in the shaking.

"Y'know," muttered Felix Jim to his dog as he stood watching them go toward the pier, "thata kid gotta lot stumack. Goin' to do som'bin fer him som' day. But thata cur, Big 'Un, no——good atall. You chaw him up som' day, Big 'Un, an' git rid o' him."

Andersen never thought of lifting the cookie bins upon the counters. It takes more than petty thievery to change a backwoods grocer's ways.

Big 'Un must have given serious thought to the matter after that. There had been a chastising tone in his master's voice, and perhaps he sensed it was because he had failed to keep them from getting into the store. It was against a gentleman dog's ethics to mess up a little fellow too much. Still violent shakings had had little effect.

But whatever way he figured it out, it remains he did plan. Then he shifted his huge body from the doorway and trotted away to the beach.

At the same time, Felix Jim decided that it was nearing time for him to act also. First, he took Old Man Tibby to task about the boy running wild. There was little reponse.

"Thata —— brat o' yourn," he said, "oughta be doin' som'bin better'n sleepin' on the beach and eatin' on me. I gonna tell som'body on him. Get him throwed into school, an' you in jail fer not tendin' to him."

Tibby shrugged his thin shoulders and essayed a twisted smile.

"Keed no good," he said. "I beat um head in."

"Naw, you don't *sabe* nawthin', you ol' iggoramus. You ain't got money. I buy um books, by gollies."

"I beat um head in," repeated Tibby.

Felix Jim turned away. He knew just what the threat of the father meant. It was what he might have termed "placating the devil." When white folks were

angry about something, promise them the child will get a thrashing, and forget about it. Every one was pleased just as much as if it were to be carried out.

So Andersen went behind his counter and thought about it. Then he placed Georgie La Fleur, grocery corner loafer, in charge and went down to the pier to search for the boy. He was going to get him aside, promise him a job in the store on Saturdays if he would go to school and become a smart man. There would be two dollars each Saturday in it and cookies. He knew cookies, like fruit, would lose favor and flavor when honestly come by. Besides Biddle Boy was a find, the brightest Indian he had ever seen in his thirty-five years in the district. He wanted something of that boy. Perhaps it was fidelity.

Big 'Un had preceded his master to the beach. Binjo, let it be understood, had made another successful haul that morning when Big 'Un was taking his after breakfast sleep. His waking eyes had just caught a glimpse of him going down the street. Binjo had stopped once in his going, thrown his head far back and let a ginger snap drop back and down his throat.

There had been no chase. Big 'Un had sat solidly thinking. Now he was ready for action.

As Felix Jim stepped off the bulkhead near the pier and landed on the beach, he saw Big 'Un advancing like a cat upon Binjo, who sat on his haunches near the water watching a dory going down stream under the lazy strokes of two Indian fishermen. Biddle Boy lay sound asleep close by.

Seeing the sinister movement of his dog, Jim stopped short, awaiting events.

Big 'Un crept steadily forward, his big pads making no sound on the sand. Then he sprang. He had Binjo by the back of the neck like a mother lion with a cub. There was still not a sound. Big 'Un had the little 'un so tightly caught that the mongrel couldn't get wind enough into his lungs to let go with a yelp.

Stepping sedately past the sleeping Biddle Boy, Big 'Un marched to the water's edge, waded in until the current began to move along his belly. Then he gave a great toss of his head and poor Binjo went sailing through the air into the stream.

One desperate yelp came to the ears of the mongrel's sleeping boss. Biddle Boy was on his feet in an instant. He stared about him. Then he saw, far out, his little Binjo's nose just above water. He was going down stream. He wasn't much of a swimmer.

Biddle Boy, accompanied now by both the giant Newfoundland and Andersen, ran down the shore.

"He's agoin' to drown, Biddle Boy," yelled Jim.

"Giss nit," said the boy.

He ran forward again, leaped upon a ledge, sped along that and then finding himself far out, flashed into the water in a perfect dive.

Big 'Un, stiff-tailed, stood there blinking his eyes. Andersen looked worried. The boy hadn't come up as quickly as usual. In fact, he hadn't come up at all.

"Thata reef," muttered Felix Jim. "—— rocks!"

Then suddenly Biddle Boy appeared. Jim saw his hands trying to make the strokes. They looked like weak fins.

"Thata boy drownin'!" he yelled. "Hit head on rock!"

He started in, wading with his hands sweeping the water before him.

Then he saw Big 'Un half way out, plunging forward like a torpedo straight for Biddle Boy. No training in this thing. Just instinct. The big dog went directly to the boy. His teeth met firmly on that shirt and the proud head turned for shore.

Felix Jim met them just where the water was meeting his chin. He grasped the boy and started back. Big 'Un let go.

At last on the beach, Felix Jim put the boy down and found him far from dead. There was a deep gash on his head. Already he was coming back to consciousness.

Andersen began to look for his dog. At last he saw him, once more far out in the stream. Again he was heading toward shore. Again he had something in his mouth. Felix Jim went into a sudden roar of laughter. Little, half-drowned Binjo!

Big 'Un deposited his bundle tenderly on the sand and sat down, his big tail thumping in applause at his own work. Then, without looking again at the sickly looking Binjo, he turned and trotted wearily from the beach.

Andersen got the boy back to the store and sent La Fleur for Mrs. O'Hara, that particular village's kind creature who, in times of need, acted as nurse and doctor for ailing man and beast.

Returning along the beach with Mrs.

O'Hara, La Fleur picked up Binjo and brought him along to the store. He was already well. He cowered down behind the cookie box, one eye toward the door where Big 'Un slept in the warm sun.

They fixed Biddle Boy and he sat up.

The first words of gratitude Felix Jim had ever heard him say came haltingly from the lad's lips—

"You —— nice fella, Jem."

"You guud kid, boy. How you feel, uh? You stay right along here, Biddle Boy. I goin' use you in store, by gollies, on Sat'days. Two dollar in it. On'y you go school other day. Uh?"

Biddle Boy smiled.

"I try um, Jem. You —— nice fella, Jem."

Mrs. O'Hara washed her hands at the rear pump and came back into the store.

"Gimme two-bits sago while I'm here, Felix."

"Yas, sure, Mrs. O'Hara."

He filled the sack overweight.

She patted Biddle Boy's head and started out. At the door she stopped.

"Say, Felix," she called back, "you really oughta do som'bin 'bout that big dawg o' yourn. Here he is 'gain shakin' that little Binjo like the —— 'cause he's got a cookie in his mouth."

LETTERS FROM A TRAMP—MARSEILLES AGAIN

by Frederic Campbell

WELL, buddy, if ever you do come here, take a poor second mate's advice and stay away from all the streets that run down-hill to the Old Port; especially the Rue Tamaris and the Street of the India Cock. A guy was found in the Rue Tamaris last night with his throat cut, not from ear to ear, but all the way around the back of his neck as well; and the night before last, the Street of the India Cock scared me out of more years of life than ever whisky's robbed me of.

I was taking a short cut to the ship from the Allees de Meilhan about one in the morning when, in the middle of this Rooster's Promenade, which is black as pitch, about six feet wide and slopes downhill like a coal chute, whom should I meet but a rough guy in a nightshirt who seemed eager to know the time. I happened to look behind me as he made the request, and noted, in the light from a window, that two guys had followed me into the alley. While I noticed this, the nightshirt jasper had stepped closer than I liked, so I backed up against the wall and pulled a line of French I learned off a mate in the French Line, and which being translated meaneth:

"Disembarrass me the flooring or will make your brains jump."

"Git, or I'll blow you inside out," you might phrase it.

I didn't have any gun, but it was too dark for them to see that, and they didn't come any nearer; one of them said mildly, "*Eh, par exemple!*" I sidled down the wall a bit, and beat it.

Down on the Quai des Belges, I met one of those hairy gorillas of chasseur-policemen—they ride bicylces, and wear two revolvers, in addition to any number of war-medals and whiskers. I told him my sad tale, and he stared at me, and stared at the mouth of the alley, and took a look at the water, and combed his mustache with his nails, and finally, what do you think *he* said? Just the same as the hold-up artist had said, "*Eh, par exemple!*"

"Don't excite yourself unduly," I begged him, this "*par exemple*" line being about equal to the American "What do you know about that?"

"The gentleman is very considerate," says the chasseur.

"It has not of what," says I, disclaiming his thanks sarcastically.

"At the gentleman's service," says the chasseur.

Not having any more idioms at hand, I bowed. So did he. Then I went back to the ship.

You'd think that was enough excitement for one night, wouldn't you? But no. There was Harris, all full of vermouth cassis, sitting on my bunk, playing the harp on my sextant, and singing hymns, under the impression that he'd been promoted from third mate to archangel.

Author of "Wild Gas," "Pluck's Broken Parole," etc.

HE SAT on a bare and lightning-smitten branch of a fig tree preening and keening. Being thus at a distance, he had an absurd resemblance to a gigantic earwig but, as a matter of fact, he was a swallow. Rusty cravat, buff waistcoat, blue-black mantle, lancet-winged and lancet-tailed, tiny-beaked and weak-legged, a thing so obviously of the air aerial that, bereft of his flying gear and shorn of wings and tail, he would practically have had nothing left of him at all.

I mention this because, although he registered a width of nearly fourteen inches from wing-tip to wing-point, and a length of seven inches, only about half of that length was body. What marvellous gear, what wonderful concentration of energy was stored up in what remained, was a wonder for all time.

He was quite still for once, except for his head, that was barely ever still—watching, lying, scanning, conning everything that moved and most things that did not. He saw the kite swinging still-winged in the infinite exactly above his head, as if suspended from a slowly revolving invisible wire. The sun he beheld like a molten copper shield blazing almost exactly in the center of the kite's orbit. The griffon vulture he watched swimming, there is no other word for it, like a moth upon the dazzled eye; the drifting dust column, too, away to the southward, where a herd of antelope moved up from the water; the cock ostrich, also, all sails set, voling along at top speed across the plain in the middle distance; the string of sand grouse, moreover, as they were a burst of shrapnel, hurtling by into the heat-haze; and last the little lean jackal, nervous and alert as a strayed cur, loping in and out between the mimosa thorn.

All these things he noted and they did not worry him. But the erect, neat, thin form of the chanting hawk, poised on one leg upon the top of a decayed stump, who had struck up his own peculiar, apparently meaningless charity, troubled the swallow very much.

He would like to know whether that precise hawk with so strange a voice for so tuneless a race, was hungry or was not. In the wild, that point makes all the difference. The swallow had found it his daily, his hourly question, in fact and, insofar as to answering it correctly, had managed to—miraculously, one must admit—to remain alive. For that, you must know, was Africa, the land of disappointments and regrets.

Finally our swallow concluded that, since he was musically inclined, that hawk was

not hungry, and he promptly launched himself in his instant, pressing, straining, light and irresponsible way. He, too, must solve the question of hunger, even though it was only by scooping up open beaks and, trawler fashion, such tiny insects that, in the main, human eyes could barely see them.

Instantly the chanting hawk stopped his chanting and eyed him, measuring his pace. He knew what for. Only too well he knew. Presumably, in thinking that the hawk had dined, he had made a mistake. And that was the wild, you know, more especially the African wild, where mistakes are not allowed, and he might assuredly have paid for it dearly in the next minute or two—the foe had already half opened his wings—if, well, if the hawk himself had not at that moment gone and made a much worse mistake, a regular "bloomer," if one may be pardoned the expression.

A mongoose, long, sinuous, and rippling—the sidelong ripple that goes with short-legged, long bodies—chanced in that moment to pass that way. He was on some secret, urgent blood business of his own, and not, for the moment, interested in the still hawk so upright on one leg. But the hawk apparently could not keep his rapacious finger out of any pie. On the point of rising, he delayed a fraction to shoot out a vermilion, skinny, clutching claw—the other claw, upon which he was not standing—at the passing brown-furred body of the mongoose and, since his claws were good imitations of fishhooks, must have got home.

There was a sort of whippy streak that might have been the mongoose; there was a burst of squawks, flappings and feathers that was certainly the hawk, and horrors! there was a hawk, still standing upon one leg because he had now got no other! And there was the mongoose vanishing under a camel thorn with something red in his mouth! Bah! But that's what you get for making a mistake in the wild, and that's Africa all over, too.

No wonder the swallow did not seem to like that vicinity and decided to quit. Everywhere, whenever he gazed all around him, he was surrounded by dim sky, brazen sun, haze, khaki landscape and that dried-up sort of thing. He removed, and almost removed straight into the jaws or rather the claws of Death, himself, for a reprisal from fate for his all but fatal mistake of taking too much interest in the hawks defeat instead of keeping eyes in the back of his head, where he had not got them, and looking out for his own fate, which is what wild nature expected him to do, apparently.

A nasty hissy sort of noise in the air, however, and the impression, rather than time for an actual glimpse, of a sort of hazy line coming down upon him out of the hanging, smoking, copper lid that was the sky, warned him just in time, and they call it in time if it's anything up to one fourth of a second, be it mentioned in the wild.

He fell two feet sidewise on the wing like an aeroplane that sideslips, and he was gone. He did this, and let by the hissing thing that became for one brief instant knife-edged wings and a long fan-tail, stopping, or rather twining its owner's terrific momentum downwards into a second momentum upon a horizontal zig-zag line, the line of the swallow.

From that point it was impossible to tell what was supposed to be happening, except to be sure that something of incalculable strenuousness was happening, till a point a mile away when the swallow fell out of the sky like a stone, into a dense reed-patch—two lions lay there basking in the sun, by the way—and the owner of the wings and tail, suddenly appearing from nowhere on the swallow's heels or rather, tail, sheered off at a tangent and became a little, long, rakish steely falcon sitting on a euphorbia tree.

The glaring sun showed that he had failed, and the glaring sun revealed him as a hobby falcon, and the last one in all the world likely to fail, for of all the winged freebooters, the hobby is almost the most marvellous. He who hunts the lightning-winged swift for a daily pastime, mind you, might indeed be excused for sulking over his failure to bag a mere wind-racing swallow.

The falcon went away and the swallow remained, staring straight down upon the tawny hide and rufus mane of a lion lying on his side asleep almost exactly beneath him. The lion held for him, personally, no terrors. He had seen that lion every evening when he returned to that reed-bed to roost, as did all the other swallows frequenting that particular lone corner of the uncharted wilderness.

Some of them were there already, perched like enormous earwigs, as we have said, upon

slender, stiff reeds ten feet high. The majority were arriving, appearing from nowhere special every instant, singly and in little gay frivolous twittering parties, such as your swallow loves to associate in. All the swallows that had, during the long panting, torpid, glaring day, been darting, shooting, swerving, glancing, gliding, flitting over a large district, and had seen, ah! how many strange things. But no, not all, quite.

Some had died, slain in the perils of fairy-like joy, with barely more than a whisper, almost without notice, by half a hundred different shapes of death. Yet those that came in were joyful, carefree, hopeful, and delightedly delightful just the same. As if this gentle, bubbling spirit of freedom and air and sun could never be, as it were, stopped even by fear.

They were more noisy than usual, these fairy children of the air; noisy in their delicately subdued, twittering way. There was, it seemed, as we say, something up, some move on the board that they all knew about as they came home to bed.

Our small Swallowtail, since name he must have, sitting, one of a row of half-a-dozen, upon his tall reed, now seemed to catch the excitement through their bodies, and began to twitter, too, ceaselessly in his tiny, demure way, his head forever gently turning every way, his bright eyes everywhere, but smoothly, and not with the restless jerk of friend sparrow.

But there was nothing in Swallowtail's demeanor, or in that of his fellows' to prepare one for that which followed.

The tropic twilight is short, sharp and business-like. There is no soft, sentimental lingering about it like our own twilight. Therefore, one expected Swallowtail and his friends to quickly settle down, tuck their little heads under their big wings and go to sleep. But, instead, as the sky kindled to flame and burnt down to a sullen glow; as two great glowworms—they were lion's eyes, really—began to steadily gleam in the darkening reed-depths; as the great bats winged past and as the zebras began to shout those short, sharp *qua-ha-ha* challenges across the plains, the swallows, excitement increased.

One row of the birds suddenly shot down from the reeds as the bird rose to a great height, and fell again to their perches with a rush.

In a few minutes another flock with a perfect shower of twitterings, in similar, sudden fashion, fell, hurtled up and dived again to the reeds.

Ten times this strange maneuver was repeated by portions of the assembly. Each time more and more birds participated till at last there came a long pause when all—and there were hundreds of them then present—sat still upon the gracefully standing reeds, and silence broken only by a strange uncanny occasional swish—that was not of reeds but of lion's tails beneath—reigned throughout the reed-bed.

A great eagle-owl made hollow nut-cracking noises somewhere; a jackal let forth one melancholy *zaaa-ya-ya-ya*, which hung on the air weirdly; a firefly went glancing past, and an elephant trumpeted suddenly in the far, blue distance.

At last, with startling abruptness, Swallowtail, with half-a-hundred companions, dropped together from their perches, rose, circled and went on circling at increasing speed—up and up and up, till their united tiny twitterings faded out, and the earth looked to them but a smoking mystery.

At something near a thousand feet they checked, roving round, tacked, scattered, rejoined and made straight off northward all save one, and that one was Swallowtail, alone.

Like a falling arrowhead, Swallowtail arrived back at the reed-bed. You could hear his extraordinarily piercing, almost shrieking twitter—quite unlike the ordinary twitter of swallows, and most nearly resembling their cries of abuse when they are mobbing a cat long before his darting form suddenly showed out of the darkening sky. And if his so strange conduct and call had been an electric shock, it would not have had a more startling effect upon all the hundreds of other swallows gathered there in that lugubrious place.

It was as if he had yelled:

"Arise! Arise! Be gone!"

And lo! They were gone, too.

As if actuated by a single lever, they dived in one body, flashed up, scattered, and flying always with this uncertain, something insect-like flight, now in front, now behind, they flickered away northward, every single bird except nineteen, who for some unknown reason, came back and quickly were asleep. Northward rising, ever rising gradually in no sort of order, but still in loose groups together, till they faded

in seconds from swallows to dots, from dots to pin points, from pin points to a patch, as it were of dust, and from dust to nothing, a memory.

H. M. S. *Peradventure*, making westing at fifteen knots upon her lawful occasions at dawn of day somewhere in the Mediterranean, and nearer the European coast than that of Africa, fell in with heavy showers. It made no difference to H. M. S. *Peradventure*.

Her captain had received a wireless wigging, and her crew expected nothing better than squally weather for the rest of the cruise anyway. But it seemed to have made a good deal of difference to somebody else, somebody whom nobody there expected ever to see in that watery spot a hundred miles from any land.

Till that precise moment, you must know, H. M. S. *Peradventure* had sighted no birds since leaving land. Not a feather of one. But no sooner was the rain upon her than lo, she was the center of a kaleidoscopic storm of them. Goodness and their wonderful little selves alone know where they came from, they in their diminutive thousands, or how.

They had just seemed to have evolved, like baby frogs in summer, out of the rain. Many—most, indeed—were flying steadily along northward, in small parties close above the following waves, but this left over, as it were, a great number of tired and exhausted, really, one believes swamped ones, circling around the ship. And very many of these were not troubling about due and proper observances in waiting for the captain's invitation to come aboard.

Never before in this life—but she carried an honored and resurrected name—had H. M. S. *Peradventure* been summarily boarded upon the high seas, but she was now with a vengeance. One counted no less than ten swallows perched along the lean muzzle of the starboard bow six-inch gun, eleven on one stay of the after-funnel; two, tired, fly-catching upon the unprotected, anti-torpedo quick-firer atop the bow gun turret—about the only use the said quick-firer ever was; perhaps one nightingale doing his best to invade a ventilator; one immaculately white-and-gray wheatear navigating all by himself on the high and lofty bridge; two little sand martins tucked up all nice and cosy to sleep under a hammock cloth; one hardy ring-ouzel, who is Scotland's blackbird, keeping a sharp lookout upon the starboard bouzers anchor, and a turtle dove apparently gone to roost on the top of the mainmast. That many were apparent to the casual eye. Dozens, probably hundreds, more could be found.

Said a seaman-gunner, removing with two huge fingers, a sopped bunch of feathers, that had been a most efficient yellow wagtail, from off a gangway platform:

"Our Mrs. Gunnery Jack 'es in 'is element. You wouldn't think to look at 'im now, that only months ago 'e was incitin' me by all the devils in cinders t' blow men t' camouflage, as you might say."

The gunnery lieutenant—how he came to be called "Mrs." one or two in the service could tell you, if Fritz hasn't gone too far—was standing in the shadow of a gun, holding in his hand what from a distance, as the seaman-gunner truly said, "looked like a cockroach seen through four o' five 'ot whiskeys, so to speak." In reality he was holding Swallowtail and none other. Even our Swallowtail who, as we know, was last heard of in the tropics, now very cold and very wet, sodden, miserable beyond expression, with eyes shut and apology for a beak open, apparently having said his prayers and resigned his commission unto death.

And him the gunnery lieutenant bore—but he was a good ornithologist, that zealous officer—down into the bowels of the ship, even unto his cabin where, 'tis whispered—but don't say I told you—he did apply first aid and artificial respiration even unto the extent of weak whisky-and-water in a spoon, at the price whisky is now and all, till at last Swallowtail:

Oped his eyes,
Took a peep,
Didn't like it,
Went to sleep.

Mrs. Gunnery Jack confided to the ward room that night as they dined, that Swallowtail was beautifully and gloriously drunk and asleep in his cabin. And that may or may not have been as true at that time as the gunnery lieutenant said. Fact remains, however, that when dawn, lean, gray and bewitched, came stealing across the gray waters, Swallowtail was gone.

Things had transpired overnight, and Swallowtail's benefactor had come off duty late. Perhaps he was too tired then to

bother about Swallowtail. Perhaps some one had left a near-by scuttle open. I don't know. But I do know that the rain had stopped and that Swallowtail had not.

An owl, silent and inquisitive, which had been seen hanging round the ship may have spotted him go. Nobody else did. But be that how it may, Swallowtail was gone, drunk or sober, fit or unfit, with or without leave—silently, secretly gone. And that was the last that was known or seen of him till—

THE cuckoo came in from the dancing, laughing, sparkling sea, swift, hawk-like and curious. He put the golden shore beneath him and shot onward to the beautiful, soft green of the countryside, all spread out before him in the dew-spangled dawn like some exquisite picture. He had come straight from Africa and, because of his hawk-like camouflage before mentioned, none had dared molest him by the way. That was his passport—his only one, indeed, and because of it he had, as is usual, come alone.

But now, in a flash, he was not alone. A blue steel barb fairly whizzed down upon him out of the sky, cutting off his first exaltant, mellow challenge of arrival into a mere *cuck*, as steam is turned off in a tap.

There is, in fact, camouflage and camouflage, but the kind which brings upon you attack because you resemble the very thing you pretend to be, must to one, afflicted with a white liver like the cuckoo, prove disconcerting at times. I take it that cuckoo would have given the first chance of a mate for breathing space to prove that he was the hawk he mimicked. But he never got it.

The barb from the blue was all round him and all over him in one and the same instant. It might have been some gigantic insect by the look of it, so far as the mere, slow, human eye could be said to get a look at it. In one second it had cut the *oo* off the cuckoo's *cuck*. In three it had reduced him to pitiful wheezings like an expiring ghost.

Nor was mere speed any use, though he flew with the express-train velocity of a wild pigeon, and rather like a pigeon, too. This, this tiny wisp of winged lightning that attacked him out of the sky, simply drew Euclid propositions round him at all and every speed, so that he seemed to shoot through the spring sun enshrined in a shimmering halo. While his ears, his brain, his nerves were pierced by a cry so shrill, so persistent, so vibrant with rage, albeit fairy rage, that no one, much less he, could mistake it.

Such a stabbing, rousing sound is only made by a swallow mobbing its tribal foes, and upon one other occasion and once heard could never be forgotten. It was the peculiar, arresting, almost unreasoning cry we last heard in the heart of Africa, when Swallowtail fell from the clouds sounding the signal to arise and begone half across the world. It was Swallowtail.

The cuckoo dived into a copse all covered with the yellow-green of young leaves, all pealing with joyous song, all alive with spring, and Swallowtail hurtled onward, the impetus of his pursuit scarcely checked, into, ah, all but into the arms of Death once more.

By some amazing juggling of flight that one could not grasp, he whizzed under the telegraph wires dead ahead of him, instead of into them. It was an astounding feat, because he could hardly have seen them as he lifted to clear the bristling spinney before he was practically into them—that is, no more than a yard away. But, wonderful as was his superb mastering of flight in that instant, it was nothing to what followed. He had not done with miracles upon that smiling dawn of spring whose very page, whose fairy page he seemed to be.

A sparrow-hawk hurtling, as sparrow-hawks always do, round the corner of a great garlanded cliff of horse-chestnuts ten yards ahead was upon him almost before he could draw breath. The sparrow-hawk's forte is surprize. Upon that he depends, lightning surprize. But it was that sparrow-hawk who got the surprize.

True to a hair he aimed, so he thought. His long yellow middle, too, specially lengthened for the purpose, clutched out and clutched air, air only. The swallow was beneath him. The swallow was above him. The swallow was here. No, the swallow was there. Confound his forked tail! Why! Why, the little impudent beggar was not dead. No, was not dead, but mobbing him. Yes, mobbing him, the terror incarnate of the wooded fields. Nor with all his matchless speed could he alter the fact. And he could not very well ignore it. Swallowtail was fairly whizzing round him like an enraged wasp and, although that gentle fairy atom had absolutely no weapon of any kind that he could actually hurt him with,

it really did look undignified. I think the slashing, dashing slayer felt that. He seemed to. Moreover his infernal temper, the worst temper among all the hawks and falcon people, immediately mastered him and, after the third maddened, ineffectual jab at the insolent prey with the wings of electricity, he hurled away, screaming with rage into the landscape, leaving Swallowtail alone in all that perfect scene of histrionic peace and purity.

Then it was, I think, that the most wonderful thing of all befell.

SWALLOWTAIL immediately turned on one wing, light as a glint of sunshine and, with a dainty twitter of pure joy, carefree as if nothing at all had happened, flashed straight down to an old thatched cowshed, tousled with lichen, peering up at him where it nestled among oaks so old that one expected to see the sun glint upon the armor of William the Conqueror, riding out at his approach.

Swallowtail might have been more than five miles from that spot by the certainty and familiarity of his action. He shot straight down into the door of that cowshed, and up on to an age-old beam, gray with the dust of ages, inside. He settled upon that beam, upon, in very fact, the remnants of an old swallow's nest, and straightway fell to yelling and fluttering as if his heart were going to break.

He was trapped, caught by bird-lime.

In the golden sunshine in the angle of the doorway a tiny golden spider put the finishing touches to a web of golden thread. In the thatch above, a sparrow chirped a happy though plebeian song of love as he pulled away thatch to make a nesting hole. The mellow, sensuous cooing of a wood-pigeon came from among the oaks, and the chorus of half a hundred bird voices rose from the spinney steadily like a barrage of song. Everybody seemed happy and in love except Swallowtail, and nobody appeared to care about him and his mental torture at all.

Then—for he was making no end of a noise with his piercing screams—a shadow darkened the doorway. A man came in. He looked round quickly and strode straight to the swallow, now nearly crazed with lime. He took Swallowtail down gently and tenderly and, holding the poor palpitating thing in his hand, carefully cleansed him. Thereafter he held out Swallowtail's right leg, looked and laughed.

There was a little metal ring upon that dainty short weak leg.

The man slipped the ring off and moved to the doorway, the better to see, and, holding the ring up, read half aloud a number and an address.

"No. 50,949. Holborn, England," he read.

The man slid his free hand into his pocket and brought forth a little book. He opened it across his other arm, turned to a page and ran his finger down the entries there.

"Ah! Here we are," he exclaimed, almost triumphantly, half aloud. "No. 50,949, marked by self as a nestling, in the old cowshed, June 30th, 1917."

He closed the book up and slipped it back into his pocket, and held Swallowtail up gently caressing the little smooth head, and placing on his leg a brand new ring.

"Yes," he went on musingly. "And a very fine nestling, too, I remember. Biggest of the brood. And so you've come back to me from— Ah! Where? I wonder? I wonder what you have seen, little bird, in the interval. Come back in your father's place. He must have perished—to find—to find love."

A joyous little scream pierced the languid air and a second swallow darted down into the cowshed, circled it, and fled out again.

"To find love," cried the man with a laugh, and literally flung Swallowtail into the air after her.

The two birds shot hither and yon in the life-giving sun, met, twittered, parted and then began a love dance in and around the oaks.

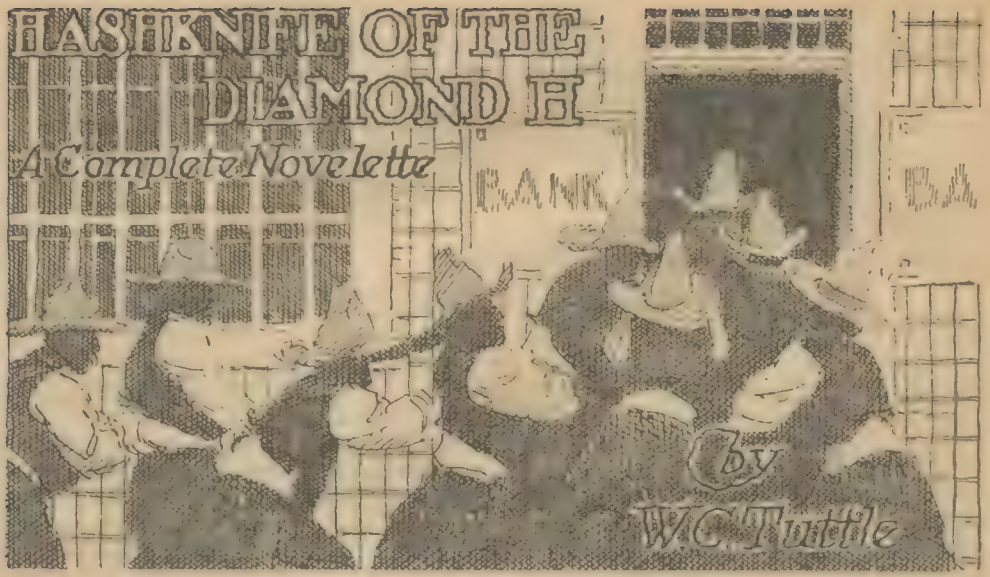
"Ah! lucky swallow," muttered the man, and turned away slowly.

Yes, Swallowtail was lucky, I think, in that he knew love, and in that he could—

"—meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same."

FLASH KNIFE OF THE DIAMOND H

A Complete Novelette



By W. C. Tuttle

Author of "Hidden Blood," "The Lovable Liar," etc.

IT WAS a gathering typical of the cow-country. The office of the local justice of the peace, a small room, badly ventilated, was filled with humanity and tobacco smoke; mostly chap-clad humanity, except for the presiding justice, conscious of his rotund importance, and a few of the store-clothes-dressed business men of the town.

The object of interest was a little old man, disheveled of appearance, with a kindly old face, in spite of evident line of dissipation, who sat humped in a chair beside the justice's desk, his hands clasped tightly in his lap. There was something pitiful in his abject pose, the uncomprehending expression of his eyes, as he looked around.

"Uncle Billy, it's thisaway," one of the cattlemen, a tall, grizzled man, cleared his throat apologetically. "Yuh see, it's thisaway, old-timer. You've lost everythin' and—and—"

"And yuh aim to send me to the poor-house?" The old man spoke thickly. "Is that it boys—to the poor-house?"

One of the cowboys in the crowd swore softly and stepped outside. The others shuffled their feet nervously and did not care to meet the wavering gaze of the old man.

"Yes, that's it," said the justice. "You've got to have somebody to take care of you. It's too bad, but it's the only thing we can think of, Uncle Billy."

The old man squeezed his hands a little tighter together and his eyes shut tightly, as he said hoarsely:

"I s'pose so. Yuh see, I didn't know it was that bad."

"Ain'tcha got any money, Uncle Billy?" another of the cowboys propounded the question. The old man turned and looked at the questioner.

"Money? Why, no, I don't reckon I have, Yak. Why do yuh ask?"

Yakima Reed shook his head, sorry to find himself for a moment the center of interest.

"No, he hasn't any money," said Steve Morris, the justice of the peace.

"I don't guess I have." Uncle Billy Holton essayed to reach in his overall pocket, but realized it was of no use.

He knew there was no money in his pocket. In the short space of two years he had lost his wife, his ranch, cattle, everything in the world, and now he was being sent to the poor-house. It was hardly a fitting finish to a man who had owned one of the best ranches in the Medicine River range.

Some of the cowboys moved softly out of the room. They were a sympathetic crew, but there was nothing they could do. The old man had become an ordinary drunk, a frowsy old nuisance, but all of them remembered the time when there was always a hearty welcome for them at the Diamond H.

"Well," said the justice ponderously, "I'm glad that's finished."

Uncle Billy looked at him, his lips quivering slightly, as he said:

"Thank yuh, Steve. I reckon yo're doin' all yuh can for me."

"Well, I—I—" Morris got to his feet and looked down at his desk— "I hope so, Uncle Billy. They'll take care of yuh."

"Yeah, I s'pose so, Steve," said the old man softly, "I jist didn't know it was as bad as this. I never expected to go there, yuh see."

"I knowed a man who went to the poor-house—" began a cowboy, but some one trod on his instep and he subsided in guarded profanity.

Uncle Billy got up and steadied himself against the desk.

"Steve, this won't go no further, will it?" he asked. "It won't git in no papers, will it?"

"In the newspapers, Uncle Billy? No, I don't think so."

"Thank yuh, Steve. Yuh see, I—I don't want—" He stopped.

"I know what yuh mean, Uncle Billy. No, this won't get into the papers. It isn't like a court case. You see, you haven't any money nor any one to take care of you, so it's up to us to see that you're taken care of."

The old man bowed his head as he nodded.

"Thank yuh, Steve. When do I go?"

"Well, it's goin' to take a few days to fix it up. Prob'ly you can leave here day after tomorrow. We'll fix it up for you at the hotel, so don't worry about that."

The grizzled cowman who had tried to explain things to the old man stepped up and pressed a ten-dollar bill into the old man's hands.

"For a little hooch," he said softly. "You need it, Uncle Billy."

The old man looked at the bill, his lips working nervously. He was aching with the desire for liquor, but somewhere within him was a spark which the whisky had not yet extinguished. He did not meet the gaze of the big cow-man as he handed back the money with shaking hands.

"N-no, Jim O'Leary," he said hoarsely. "I—I'm not goin' to be thirsty for liquor no more. Thank yuh jist the same."

"Better be sure, Uncle Billy."

Uncle Billy looked up at O'Leary, a firm resolve in his old eyes. His shoulders squared a little—just a little.

"I'm sure, Jim. I'm goin' to the one place on earth where I never expected to go—and I want t' go clean. I've been an awful fool, ain't I? Everythin' is gone. I've lost my ranch, my cattle and the respect of everybody. I lost my—wife."

He started to say more, but it seemed that he was forced to shut his lips, and O'Leary stepped aside to let him stagger out of the room. Out at the edge of the narrow board sidewalk Uncle Billy paused, blinking in the bright light and surveyed the main street of Medicine River.

ACROSS the street was the War Paint saloon, its wide-open door disclosing the fact that men were at the bar. Uncle Billy could hear the clink of glasses, the dull rumble of conversation, but he did not cross the street. Instead, he made his erratic way up to the walk to a point beyond the Medicine River bank. He sat down on the edge of the high sidewalk where a gnarled cottonwood, the only one on the street, afforded a little shade.

Jim O'Leary shook his head and walked up the street to the bank, where he stepped inside and shook hands with Parker Miller, president of the institution. They were old friends. O'Leary drew Miller to the door and pointed at old Uncle Billy.

"Somebody said there was a movement on foot to send him to the poor-farm," said Miller. "How did he take it, Jim?"

"Oh, I dunno, Park. I feel sorry for him, but I s'pose it's the best thing to do."

"The best thing," nodded Miller.

"You own the Diamond H now, don-t'cha?" asked O'Leary.

Miller smiled grimly.

"Yes, we own it, Jim—such as it is."

"Meanin' what, Park? The Diamond H is—"

"Come in and let's talk in my office," suggested Miller.

O'Leary followed him through the bank, speaking to Frank Laskey, the cashier, who nodded pleasantly. O'Leary was a good customer of the bank. Once in the private office, Miller picked up the conversation.

"Yes, we own the Diamond H, Jim. When Uncle Billy and his wife busted up over Uncle Billy's drinking and gambling, we took a first mortgage on the Diamond H for ten thousand dollars.

"At that time we were sure that Uncle

Billy and Ma Holton would patch things up. You see Uncle Billy and his wife divided up everything, Uncle Billy keeping the ranch and giving her ten thousand in cash.

"The mortgage was for one year, Jim. The Diamond H was worth a lot more than that. Uncle Billy kept drinking and gambling all that year, and when the mortgage came due he had no money to pay it off. In fact he was too addled from drink to care.

"A bank is different than an individual, Jim. I was forced to foreclose. There is a year allowed for redemption, you know. That year was up a month ago. Right now the Medicine River bank owns the Diamond H ranch, and there isn't twenty head of stock wearing that brand on this range."

O'Leary looked curiously at the banker, "You mean that somebody got away with the stock, Park?"

Miller spread his hands, a sour smile on his lips, "Draw your own conclusions, Jim. We couldn't put guards on the job to protect a mortgage. The old man is no fool."

"You think he sold the cattle?"

"What would you think?"

"But he's goin' to the poor-farm, Park."

"There are no bars to keep him there."

"That's true, Park. Hm-m-m. I never thought of that. Are yuh sure about the cattle?"

"Absolutely. Perhaps the ranch itself is worth ten thousand dollars, but I'm afraid no one would pay that much."

"No, not hardly. It looks like the bank was stuck."

"Not only looks like it—it is, Jim."

"Well, it's a funny proposition. I hear you've got a new man in charge of the Diamond H."

"Yes. In fact, I've got two men. I heard them arguing the other day about which was the foreman, so I don't know exactly which one is in charge." Miller laughed softly. "I don't mind telling you that the men were recommended to me by the Cattle Association."

"Stock detectives?"

"No, I don't think so, Jim. Anyway, I didn't ask for a detective. I wanted a dependable man who was also a practical cowman. You know there isn't an available man around here. Of course I might have taken one of the cowboys, but I thought it might be better to have a stranger. These men come well-recommended, and they seem to know their business."

"Yakima Reed and Chuck Allison are still there, ain't they?"

"No. The ranch won't support four hired men. I asked Hartley if the two of them could run the place and he said that the two of them could run the whole —— government, if they had half a chance."

"Yore foreman named Hartley, Park?"

"Yes. The other man is named Stevens."

"Have yuh questioned the old man about the stock?"

"Yes, but he didn't seem to understand what I meant. It's a bad deal all the way around; the old man goes to the poor-farm and the Medicine River bank has made a bad investment."

"Where is the old lady livin' now?"

"I think she is still in Phoenix, but we have never heard. It was a shame for two people of their age to separate, Jim. Both of them salt of the earth. After she left him he sobered up and said he was through drinking, but I guess he lost heart."

"I offered him a ten-spot today," said O'Leary. "He sure needed a shot of liquor, but he refused the money. Said he was through."

"Might as well start now," smiled Miller. "He won't get any of it where he's going."

"HOW didja say yuh wanted yore aig, 'Hashknife?'" "Sleepy Stevens" leaned over the range at the Diamond H ranch, a hot frying pan in one hand, an egg in the other.

Hashknife Hartley sprawled across the table, reading à dog's-eared copy of a medicine almanac, squinted at Sleepy, as he licked his thumb and turned a page.

"Turned over," he said shortly. "Yuh ask me that every time."

The egg sizzled in the hot fat.

"Sleepy, what sign of the Zodiac was you born under?"

"What'sa Zod'ac, Hashknife?" —

"Circle of —— fool pictures. Goat, mess of fish and a jigger who has just been operated on and—"

Sleepy had tried to flop the egg in the pan and was now looking down at the splatter on the floor.

"You get yore egg planked," said Sleepy.

"Not on Tuesday, Mister Stevens. Try agin'."

"You take it or leave it, cowboy," declared Sleepy. "There's jist one aig left, and I'm eatin' mine straight-up."

"Just one left, Sleepy?"

"You know that's all. Lady Godiva and Mary Garden only lays one aig per day apiece, Hashknife."

"I *sabe* human nature, Sleepy; but ain't we got three chickens?"

"We has. The third one is a baritone."

"Oh, that's his alibi, eh?"

Sleepy fried his egg, put it on a plate and sat down at the far end of the table from Hashknife, who drank his coffee and read ancient jokes from the almanac.

And these were the two men who had been recommended by the Cattlemen's Association of Arizona to manage the affairs of the Diamond H ranch. Hashknife Hartley stood close to six feet and a half in his high-heeled boots, his slenderness accentuated by his height. His face was long and bony, invariably sad in repose, his eyes nested in a mass of grin-wrinkles. Sleepy Stevens was of medium height, broad of shoulder and slightly bowed of legs. His over-developed sense of humor showed in the grin-marks of his face, while his eyes seemed to register a perpetual innocence of guile. These two were not at all ornamental, but entirely capable.

Sleepy finished his egg and leaned back to enjoy a cigaret.

"I've made up our minds," he said slowly, exhaling a thin stream of smoke through his nostrils and squinting thoughtfully at his cigaret.

"Thasso?" Hashknife looked up from his almanac.

"Yea-a-ap. We're goin' to wash up the dishes, saddle up and ride down to Medicine River. When we git there we're goin' to walk in the bank, hand Mr. Miller the key to the clock and tell him we're surrenderin'."

"Thasso? Huh. Sleepy, here's another funny story. An Irishman —"

"I've heard yuh read that three times today, Hashknife. I can recite every danged thing in that almanac, except the moonrise and the sunfall, and who in —— cares about that? Honest to grandma, I'm sick of this fool job. Nothin' to do!" Sleepy got to his feet and waved his arms.

"'S a good job," said Hashknife.

"Good for what? There ain't nothin' to do, except feed two hens and a rooster, eat three times a day and play crib. By grab, I've fifteen-two'd until I hate —— out of a crib-board. Hashknife, I like you quite a little. You've got some likable qualities, even if yuh don't look it. Are yuh listenin' to me, you sand-hill crane?"

"Feller don't have to listen when yuh yell thataway, Sleepy."

"All right. You got us into this here job. They made a mistake when they hired men to handle this place, Hashknife. A couple of old ladies would be almost too much for these jobs. So I'm goin' away. You can stay if yuh want to, but Mister Stevens' fav'rite son is goin' to fare him forth to the broad highway in search for adventure, *sabe?*"

"Here's another good one, Sleepy. A feller comes home drunk one night and—"

"Aw-w-w, ——!" Sleepy snorted indignantly and walked to the door. "Been here two weeks and all that's happened is two aigs per day bein' layed."

"Yeah, it has been kinda tranquil," admitted Hashknife.

"Tranquil! My ——, it's been overbearin'. The rust has began to flake off me." He walked outside and circled around to the porch, where he sat down to contemplate. Hashknife sauntered through the house and joined him on the porch, still carrying the almanac. Sleepy noticed this, and snorted defiantly.

"Don't read t' me," he pleaded.

"Yo're billious, Sleepy. We'll ride down and get yuh some calomel."

"Calomel! I never seen such a range. I'm gettin' bed-sores, I tell yuh! If this keeps up much longer I'm goin' to take a shot at somebody. I want action, cowboy. It ain't like you to stay here and grow rusty, Hashknife."

"I ain't kickin'," said Hashknife slowly. "If they'd said there was a lot of trouble in this country, you'd kick agin' comin', and when there ain't no trouble yuh kick because there ain't. Yore idea of a happy medium would be to have a feller with a busted gun huntin' for yuh, Sleepy."

"Thasso? By golly, I wish that everybody in the country would rise up agin' me," he said savagely. "I'm all primed to fight the world."

"Sorry, Napoleon, but we're jist out of wars this week. We've got a shipment on the way, but yuh know how unreliable freight is these days."

"Yo're awful funny, Hashknife."

"I've got a funny job, pardner."

"Uh-huh, yuh shore have. There comes the stage."

THE road from Lone Fir paralleled the west fence of the Diamond H ranch enclosure, and they watched the creaking vehicle, drawn by four horses, come to a stop at the ranch-house gate.

"Must be a new almanac for yuh," observed Sleepy. It was an uncommon thing for the stage to stop at the ranch.

The driver was busy unstrapping a trunk from the boot, and a woman dismounted, her arms filled with packages. The driver carried the trunk to the gate, talked for several moments with the woman before mounting his seat and driving on toward Medicine River.

"Company, by golly," said Sleepy. "Now who in thunder is this?"

They walked down toward the gate and met the little old lady, who was coming toward them, her dusty face beaming.

"Oh, I thought it was some of the boys I knew," she said, as she looked them over. There was disappointment in her voice.

"I'm sorry, ma'am," said Hashknife smiling. "I'd shore like to be one of the boys yuh used to know."

"Well, it's all right," she laughed at them and allowed Hashknife to relieve her of some bundles.

"My name is Hartley," he told her. "I'm in charge of the ranch."

"I'm Stevens," grinned Sleepy, his grouch forgotten. "I'm in charge of half of the ranch."

The old lady laughed and dusted off her shirts, "My, it sure is dusty on that stage. I am Mrs. Holton. Mostly everybody calls me Ma Holton. Oh, lordy, it is good to be home." She breathed deeply and her eyes suddenly filled with tears.

To Hashknife and Sleepy it was an awkward situation. They followed her to the front porch, where she leaned against one of the porch posts, as though all tired out.

"Can I help yuh, ma'am?" asked Hashknife.

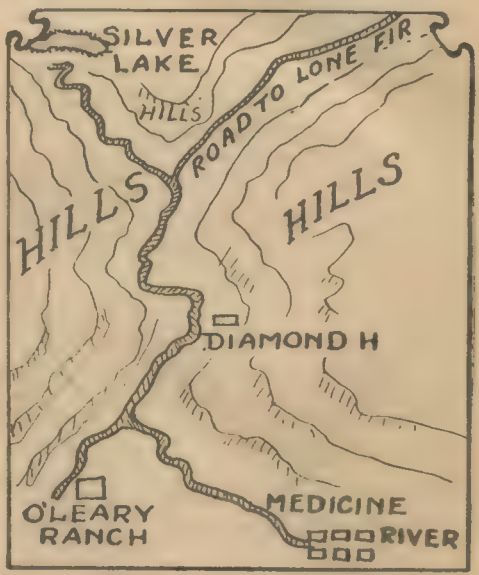
"Help me? No, I guess not, Mr. Hartley. You see it has been a long, long time since I last saw the old place, and it—it—"

"Thasall right." Hashknife patted her on the shoulder. "You go ahead and cry all yuh want to, while me and Sleepy go down and get yore trunk."

They left her standing beside the post and went down after the trunk.

"What do yuh make of it, Hashknife?" asked Sleepy.

"I dunno. She says she came home. We've heard enough to the story to *sabe* that she's the former wife of old man Holton, Uncle Billy. But I dunno why she came



home, Sleepy. Anyway, it ain't none of our danged business. She's a darned sweet old lady, and if she wants to live on the old ranch, it's all right with me."

"Me too," echoed Sleepy.

Ma Holton had gone in the house by the time they arrived with the trunk, but she was waiting for them.

"Will you unrope it right away?" she asked. "I must get out my work clothes. Of all the dirty houses I have ever seen, this is the worst."

"Yes'm," said Sleepy. "Me and Hashknife ain't much on the chambermaid stuff."

"Most men ain't," she said. "But I'm just so glad to be here that I don't mind a little dirt. I haven't been in the kitchen yet."

"That's good," said Hashknife.

Sleepy coiled up the rope and hurried to the kitchen, where he proceeded to mop up the planked egg and otherwise knock the top layer off the worst of the dirt, while Hashknife leaned in the doorway and whistled unmusically.

"Anyway," said Sleepy philosophically, "somethin' happened."

"It mostly always does," said Hashknife.

"We'll have to quit swearin' so —— much around the house."

Ma Holton appeared in her work clothes, threw up her hands in holy horror at the appearance of the kitchen and began a cleaning campaign such as the old Diamond H ranchhouse had not seen in a long time. Hashknife and Sleepy helped her willingly. It was a welcome change from the two weeks of idleness, and they went to it with a will.

They told her about how they happened to be in charge of the ranch, and how they had spent their time.

"Huntin' for aigs mostly," said Sleepy. "Lady Godiva kinda played a game with us every day. That danged hen shore hid her produce on us, Ma."

"What a name for a hen!" exclaimed Ma Holton.

"There she is now," grinned Sleepy, pointing through the open doorway.

"Prob'ly wonderin' why we don't hunt her daily aig."

"Why, that poor hen is moulting. It's a wonder she layed at all."

"Is that what she's doin'?" queried Sleepy. "We didn't know. She was runnin' around without hardly any clothes on, so we named her thataway. The other one gits all over dust and does a wiggle-dance. We didn't figger out a name for the he-hen."

Ma Holton laughed and leaned on her broom.

"Oh, it seems good to be back in the cow country boys; to hear a cowboy talk again."

"Yes'm, I s'pose it does. You aim to stay here all the time?"

"As long as I live, I hope. You see, I own the ranch now."

"Yuh do?"

"Yes, I bought the mortgage and paid the interest. It took every cent I owned, but I don't mind. There is money to be made on this ranch, and right now it is worth a lot more than the price of that mortgage."

Hashknife and Sleepy exchanged quick glances. They knew that the Diamond H was not a paying concern.

"Yuh bought it from the bank?" asked Hashknife.

"Yes. A man came up to Cheyenne and we settled up everything. I have always had this in mind. You see, it was my home for so many years that I—I just had to come back."

"Ten thousand, wasn't it?" asked Hashknife.

"And interest, yes," Ma Holton laughed softly. "I got me a job in a store in Cheyenne and I never had to spend my bankroll."

"Well, Ma, I'm glad for yuh," said Hashknife. "I wish there was somethin' we could do for yuh, but there don't seem to be. We'll go down to the bank in the mornin' and see Mr. Miller. He won't want us any longer, and you'll want to hire some of the boys you've knowed for a long time, of course."

"Well, I don't know. I haven't been here for so long that I don't know any of the boys, I suppose. Things must have changed."

She worked for several minutes, cleaning off the stove, polishing thoughtfully. Then:

"I suppose you've heard of our—our trouble. Most every one has, it seems. Did—did you ever meet Mr. Holton, Uncle Billy?"

Hashknife squinted at Sleepy, who scratched his head and moved over closer to the door. Ma Holton looked up at Hashknife and found him picking an imaginary splinter in his thumb.

"You have seen him, haven't you?" she asked.

"Yes'm," admitted Hashknife.

"Well," she looked from one to the other, "what is wrong? He isn't—" She hesitated and came closer to Hashknife. "What is it? I—I haven't heard, you see."

"Well, I don't know him, Ma," said Hashknife slowly. "We're kinda strangers in this range, me and Sleepy. But I s'pose I might as well tell yuh. A man rode past here last night and said there was a meetin' in Medicine River yesterday and they decided to send Uncle Henry Holton to the—to the poor-farm."

"To the poor-farm?" She stared at Hashknife. "Sending him to the poor-farm? Why—why that—is it true?"

"Yes'm, I s'pose it is. I dunno any reason why this man should lie to us about it, 'cause it wasn't any of our business."

MA HOLTON walked away from the stove and sat down in a chair. Her face was almost as gray as her hair now. Hashknife shifted nervously. He could see Sleepy walking down across the yard toward the corrals, and wished that he was with him. He wanted to say something to the old lady,

but there was nothing to be said.

"They held a meeting and decided to send him to the poor-farm," she said slowly, as though repeating a sentence and was not quite certain that she was wording it properly.

"Yes'm," said Hashknife softly.

She looked up at him and shook her head, "No, that cannot be the truth. You see, we—we—why, Uncle Billy and me lived here in this house for twenty years. This is as much his home as mine."

"Yes'm, I s'pose it is."

"He got to drinking, Uncle Billy did. I suppose lots of men do."

"Yes'm. It ain't no uncommon thing to do."

She shook her head and looked up at him, her eyes filled with tears.

"I got religion," she said simply.

"Yes'm, I've knowed folks to get religion."

"It was a revival meeting. I got religion —and Uncle Billy got drunk."

"Everybody accordin' to their views," said Hashknife in all seriousness.

"I suppose. I lost my religion, after it was all over, but Uncle Billy still drank. I—my religion was like small-pox, I guess. It was awful while it lasted, and I've still got some of the pits left. It wasn't a good religion though. I had the religious spirit, but not the Christian one. It was the kind that tears down temples instead of trying to clean them. I can see it now, when it is too late."

"There ain't anythin' too late," said Hashknife, "except dodgin' a bullet or delayin' yore departure from a spot near the hind legs of a mule."

Ma Holton looked at him and smiled. He was smiling, and there was something contagious about his smile.

"I think I like you," she said.

"That's good, Ma."

They were sort of holding a mutual admiration meeting, when Sleepy came softly in and placed an egg on the table at Ma's elbow.

"Lady Godiva's," he said softly, and turned back to the door.

"Where yuh goin'?" asked Hashknife.

"I'm shadowin' Mary Garden. If you think it's hard to trail a horse-thief, you jist try out-guessin' a danged hen."

Sleepy hunched his shoulders and went slowly across the yard, while from down in the willows behind the stable came the well-known *Cut, cut, cut, ca-dar-cut* of a triumphant hen.

"If he gets that other egg, I'll make a cake," said Ma Holton.

"Well, if he don't, I will," declared Hashknife, and he went down toward the willows, fairly galloping in his haste, while Ma Holton stood in the kitchen door, a wistful smile on her old face. At least she was at home, among the kind of people she had always known, and she must smile, even with the pain in her heart.

It was after the best meal they had eaten on the Diamond H that Hashknife and Sleepy sat together on the porch of the ranch-house, while Ma Holton cleaned up the supper dishes.

"This is what I'd call home now," observed Sleepy expansively.

Hashknife nodded thoughtfully over his cigaret. Ma Holton was singing an old church hymn, and Hashknife squinted at the open door behind them.

"Sleepy, that danged bank has stuck Ma for this ranch. It ain't worth the price of that mortgage. The buildings are pretty old and need a lot of repair, and this ain't a country where there's much of a premium on water. There ain't twenty head of Diamond H stock in these hills, so where does she get off?"

"Well, let her find out," advised Sleepy. "She's just as happy as a medder-lark now, and that one jolt yuh gave her is enough for one day. She's stuck, that's a cinch—and I feel like goin' down and stickin' up that bank for ten thousand."

"And interest, Sleepy—at eight percent."

Ma Holton came out and joined them a few minutes later, and Sleepy carried a rocking-chair from the living-room. It was one of those quiet evenings, with only the sleepy calling of the birds and the far-away bawling of a cow to break the stillness. The twilight had softened the harsh contour of the ridges and some of the sunset colors still glowed in the western horizon.

"There don't seem to be any cattle using that ridge tonight," said Ma Holton, pointing at a broken hog-back ridge, backed by a streak of opal sky. "Uncle Billy and me used to sit here in the evenin' and watch them coming down to water, with the sunset colors behind them. We used to think it was better than any picture ever painted."

"I'll betcha," agreed Hashknife, and

added, "Mebbe there's water back in the upper cañons, Ma, and they don't have to come down to the creek."

"Perhaps. I wonder if things have changed much. It seems as though I have been away only a few days. The old place hasn't changed much. We used to have awful good times here—big dinners and dances—and folks used to come from all over the country. You haven't been here long enough to meet many folks, have you?"

"Not many," said Hashknife.

So she told them of the good days of the Diamond H, while they smoked and listened. It was a life they both knew well, the rough, hearty, big-hearted fun of the range country, where laughter quickly followed tears, and where people were friends, not merely acquaintances.

"But it's still thataway here," said Hashknife. "There ain't nothin' to change folks, Ma. The old Diamond H will always be the same old place, and a friend is always a friend."

"Yes, that is true, but the Diamond H will never be the same."

They knew what she meant. Uncle Billy had always been the moving spirit in the festivities.

The last trace of the twilight faded. Gone was the ridge where the cattle used to come down to drink. Ma Holton sighed and got to her feet.

"I'm tired," she said, "but I'm happy tired. Won't you boys sleep in the house tonight, instead of the bunk-house. It—it seems lonesome, somehow."

"Sure, we'd jist as soon, Ma," said Sleepy. "We'll take that back bedroom, if yuh don't mind."

"Thank you, boys. I'll go in now."

She went in the living-room and lighted the lamp, while Hashknife and Sleepy rolled a good-night cigaret. The big gate, which opened out to the main road, creaked softly, and they heard the wooden fastener *cluck* back into the socket.

"Somebody comin'," observed Hashknife, peering toward the gate. It was several minutes before they discerned the form of a man, coming slowly toward them. He came up to the porch, where the light from the doorway illuminated his face.

It was Uncle Billy Holton. He did not seem to see them for a moment, as he peered around.

"Good evenin'," said Hashknife pleasantly. The old man started.

"I didn't see anybody around," he said wearily. "It got dark on me. Mebbe I started out too late, and I—I didn't realize it was so far."

"Didja walk out here from town?" asked Hashknife.

"Yeah, I—" He hesitated for a moment. "I was goin' away tomorrow mornin' and I kinda thought I'd like to take a look at the old place before I went. But it's too dark now; so I'll jist set down for a few minutes and then go back."

"For ——'s sake!" whispered Hashknife. He had turned his head and saw Ma Holton standing in the doorway. She was holding to both sides of the doorway, looking out at the old man.

He lifted his head and looked at her. She had her back to the light, but Hashknife could see the strained expression on the old man's face, as he looked at her; an expression of astonishment, hope, misery. He lifted a hand and brushed it across his eyes.

"Uncle Billy, is that you?" she whispered.

"Yeah, it's—it's me, Ma," he said hoarsely. "I jist came back."

"I just came back, too, Billy."

They were still staring at each other, when Hashknife grasped Sleepy by the sleeve and drew him around the corner of the house.

"There's some things that's too —— sacred for two ordinary cowpunchers to listen to," said Hashknife thickly, as they sat down on the steps of the bunk-house.

"Uh-huh," gulped Sleepy. "My ——, I was glad to git out of there. Walked all the way out here to take a look at the old ranch, and it got dark on him. Jist wanted to set down for a few minutes and then walk back. Aw-w-w, ——!"

"I'll play yuh a game of crib," offered Hashknife.

"All right. Best two out of three, and then we'll mosey back and see if the old folks are still astonished at each other."

IT WAS possibly an hour later that the game broke up and the two cowboys left the bunk-house.

"'S a funny thing there ain't no light," observed Hashknife.

"Prob'ly settin' on the porch and savin' oil," grinned Sleepy. "Man, I'm bettin' they had a lot to talk about."

But there was no one on the front porch. The door was wide open, but from within came no sound. They walked in and Hashknife scratched a match.

"For ——'s sake, light the lamp!" exclaimed Sleepy, as the flare of the match partly illuminated the room.

Hashknife lighted the lamp and then looked around. Ma Holton was roped to a rocking-chair and gagged with a dish-towel, while Uncle Billy sprawled on his face near the door.

As quickly as possible Sleepy removed the ropes and gag from the old lady, while Hashknife lifted the old man to the couch and examined his injuries. His right eye was swollen shut from a blow which had struck him near the right temple, but otherwise he seemed uninjured.

Ma Holton was unable to talk until Sleepy gave her a drink of water.

"For gosh sake, what happened?" asked Hashknife.

"I don't hardly know," she confessed, looking anxiously at Uncle Billy, who was still unconscious.

"He's all right," assured Hashknife. "Just a tunk on the head. He ain't in very good physical shape and it played him plumb out."

"Didn't yuh see who done it?" questioned Sleepy.

"No," Ma Holton shook her head. "We were sitting on the porch, and I noticed that the lamp had gone out. I told Uncle Billy that it must have burned dry and we went inside to light another lamp.

"Then I felt somebody grab me. I thought at first it was Uncle Billy, and I started to say something, when a cloth was shoved in my mouth and some one grabbed my arms. I—I tried to fight, but it was no use.

"I heard somebody swear and Uncle Billy called to me, but just then I heard somebody fall, and it must have been Uncle Billy."

"Yuh don't know how many men were here?" asked Hashknife.

"No, I didn't see anybody. It was awful dark in here. But there must have been more than one."

"That's a queer deal," muttered Hashknife. They secured a pan of water and bathed the old man's head. He had been hit hard, but soon recovered. His story was about the same as Ma Holton's.

Hashknife propped him up against a pillow, lighted another lamp and went on a tour of inspection. But they could find nobody, nor could they find any reason for the attack. As far as they could determine nothing had been touched.

Range folks are not in the habit of locking windows and doors; so it was an easy matter for any one to enter the house from the rear. They went back to the living-room, where they found the old man much improved.

"It's beyond me," declared Ma Holton. "Why in the world would any one do this to us, I'd like to know. It was just like having a nightmare. There I was, setting in that chair, unable to move or talk, and I knew that Uncle Billy had been hurt. Oh, it seemed hours before I heard you boys coming."

"What do you make of it, Uncle Billy?" asked Sleepy.

"Craziest thing I ever heard of. No reason for it."

"Mm-m-m. Any popular lunatics in this country?"

Uncle Billy laughed painfully and felt of his head, "Not that we have any record of. I s'pose we're all more or less crazy."

"Anybody got it in for you?" asked Hashknife.

Uncle Billy squinted painfully, "Well, I —I don't think that any of them would sneak up on me in the dark."

"Well, they didn't do any talking," said Ma. "They didn't plug my ears. I heard them leave this room, but I couldn't turn my head, so I don't know where they went, nor how long they stayed."

"How long was it after we left?" asked Hashknife.

"I don't know," confessed Ma. "You see," she smiled wistfully, there are times when folks forget the minutes."

"Yeah, I'll betcha," grinned Hashknife. "Well, it's all over and nobody got killed. They won't come back tonight, so I move that we all go to bed. "I'll make a bandage for Uncle Billy. If you've got a little arnica we'll plumb ruin that swellin'—and a black eye wears out after while."

"He is going to stay here," said Ma Holton. "He can have that bedroom on the east side. You see, Uncle Billy ain't going to no poor-farm. We were both fools and we admit it. And just as soon as we can find a minister or a justice of the peace, we're going to get married again."

"Hurray!" whooped Hashknife. "And we'll pull off a dance in the old Diamond H, eh? Make old Medicine River set up and howl at the moon. Whooee-e-e!"

He slapped Uncle Billy on the back, almost upsetting him and did a war-dance around Ma Holton's chair.

"But will they come to our dance?" asked Ma wistfully.

"Will who come?"

"The folks of Medicine River?"

"They'll come a-runnin', or feet-first, Ma. Get me that arnica."

Uncle Billy got to his feet, bracing one hand against the table, and looked down at Ma Holton.

"Ma," he said, his voice quavering, "I thought the old world had come to an end—but it's just startin'."

But long after every one else at the Diamond H had gone to sleep, Hashknife fought his pillow and wondered what it was all about; wondered why any one would mishandle two old people for no visible reason.

Hashknife knew that some one had robbed the Diamond H. He and Sleepy had been told all about it before they took the job. But they had not been hired to hunt for rustlers, so that part of the deal did not interest them.

But Hashknife was interested in the fact that the bank had sold Ma Holton the mortgage. Possibly it was business, mused Hashknife, but a bad business. She had bought a pig in a poke.

"Anyway, I'm goin' down and tell Miller what I think of him tomorrow," decided Hashknife. "I may not be able to do it, 'cause I ain't got a whole lot of words, but I'll use what I've got."

Sleepy was snoring loudly; so Hashknife stuffed part of the pillow in his mouth before he blew out the lamp.

"Whaza want?" grunted Sleepy.

"I jist wanted to tell yuh that I think the peace of the Diamond H is about over."

"Thaz good. Go sleep, you danged owl."

ANDREW JACKSON POLK was a very self-satisfied sort of an attorney at law. He was so broad-minded that right or wrong was all a matter of precedent. Like Abraham Lincoln, he was gaunt of frame and rather coarse of feature, but the resemblance stopped right there. He was prominent in two places—his nose and his Adam's apple.

It was a common practice for Andrew Jackson Polk to leave his little office on the main street of Medicine River about nine o'clock in the morning—he slept in the rear of the office—and cross the street to the War Paint saloon, where he imbibed a large glass of "cawn-juice" and exchanged pleasantries with the bartender.

It might be well to mention that Andrew Jackson Polk was from the South—or rather his paternal ancestors had moved from somewhere in that locality while Andrew was still in swaddling clothes, but in some way he had adhered to the Southern drawl, affected by stage colonels, Uncle Toms, etc.

At any rate, he was a leading attorney of the Medicine River country, so his ancestry and dialect was neither a help nor a hindrance in a land where nobody cared who your grandfather was nor how you talked.

And it so happened that he fared forth to the War Paint saloon to absorb his morning's morning and met therein Hashknife and Sleepy, who had ridden early from the Diamond H. They had left Ma and Uncle Billy telling each other across the breakfast table what they would do to make amends for the things they had done before.

"Have someth-in' to shake the sleep out of yuh," invited Hashknife.

"Thank yuh, suh," said Andrew Jackson Polk, nodding to the bartender. "I'll take the usual, Jeff."

Thereupon Jeff Long, the bartender, filled a large high-ball glass with corn liquor and shoved it across the bar.

"To you, suh," said Andrew Jackson Polk, and the two cowboys watched in amazement as the Adam's apple vibrated convulsively and the glass was empty.

"My ——!" snorted Sleepy. "You shore don't gnaw at yore liquor."

"Ahem-m-m!" Andrew Jackson Polk shuddered, grimaced—smiled.

"I don't like to get personal, but I'd like to know what yore business is," said Hashknife.

"I am," said Andrew J. Polk, "an attorney at law. My name is Andrew Jackson Polk, at your service, suh."

"Uh-huh—a lawyer."

"Commonly called," nodded Polk. The huge drink had begun to percolate and he expanded visibly. "I have been mentioned as a possibility for county attorney, although I have never been an office seeker."

"Kinda hide yore light under a bushel, eh?" smiled Hashknife.

"I do not seek the flare of publicity. Shall we drink again?"

"I'd like to," said Sleepy innocently. "I've been havin' a little trouble with my eyes, and I wasn't sure whether I seen right or not."

They drank again, still amazed at the swallowing ability of Andrew Jackson Polk. It was not often that the attorney imbibed the second drink, but common courtesy forced him to return the compliment—and he had eaten no breakfast as yet.

The two cowboys rolled their cigarets, while Andrew Jackson Polk leaned on the bar, examining his empty glass. He had not cleared his throat, following the last drink, but finally was able to accomplish it. He upset his glass on the bar, knocked it aside, as though it was something he never expected to use again, and unbuttoned his collar.

"Feel cramped around the neck?" asked Sleepy innocently.

"I feel nothing, suh," said Andrew Jackson Polk. "I am about to sing." He braced his legs and tried several times to hum a tune, but the effort was wasted.

"Let's not sing," suggested Hashknife.

"I bow to shuperior wishdom," said Andrew Jackson Polk. "Let's go and eat shomething."

"We had breakfast at the ranch," said Hashknife.

"What ranch—if I may ask a question, suh?"

"The Diamond H."

"Oh!" Andrew Jackson Polk squinted with one eye at Hashknife. "Diamond H, eh? It appears, suh, that you are the strangers who have taken cha'ge of that ranch. I am pleased to meet yo', gentlemen. And now I must tea' myself away. Until we meet again, gentlemen."

He struck his shoulder against the side of the door, turned completely around on the sidewalk and only saved himself from a fall by grasping a porch-post with both hands.

"Whoa!" he snorted.

It took him some time to get his bearings, and he went up the street, heading in the direction of the nearest restaurant, and giving a good imitation of a man who realizes his condition, but defies the world to prove it by his walk.

"Drunken dignity," laughed Hashknife. "I never was able to figure out why a lawyer should try to be dignified, unless they had so much to conceal that they was afraid to relax."

"Polk is a queer jigger," said the bartender. "I've been here quite a while, but this is the first time I've ever seen him take two drinks in succession."

"If he took three he'd have to wear a divin' suit," laughed Sleepy.

A man came from a room at the rear of the saloon, carrying a suitcase, and stopped at the bar. He was a plainly dressed, rather pale-faced sort of a person. He nodded to Hashknife and shook hands with the bartender.

"Goin' to take the stage, Charley?" asked the bartender.

"Yes. Be good to yourself, Jeff. I'll probably be back in a month or so. Don't take any bad money and keep away from the girls."

"You leave that to me, Charley. So-long."

He picked up his suit-case, nodded to the two cowboys and walked across the street.

"Best faro dealer in the country," said the bartender. "He's been goin' to take a vacation for a long time."

"What's his name?" asked Sleepy.

"Charley Deal. Name kinda fits his occupation, eh?"

"He don't look like a gambler," observed Hashknife.

"Well, he sure is." The bartender polished a glass carefully. "Charley never raises his voice, never seems to get mad. Mebbe it's because he's educated. But lemme tell yuh somethin', gents: Don't never start nothin' with him."

"Not us," said Hashknife. "We never start trouble with anybody. If everybody was like me and Sleepy, they could turn West Point into a hospital for crippled doves."

"I suppose they could," nodded the bartender innocently. It was doubtful if he knew what West Point was, and he was willing to take the crippled doves for granted.

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy crossed the street to a store, where they purchased some tobacco. There was little of interest around Medicine River at that time in the day, and they wanted to kill time until the bank opened.

Andrew Jackson Polk was coming from the restaurant. A big breakfast had killed

the effects of the liquor, and he was fairly sober. Hashknife and Sleepy followed him into his office, but he was none too cordial.

"You got any free advice this mornin'?" asked Hashknife.

"Personal or legal, suh?" asked Polk.

"Personal don't cost anythin', so we'll call this personal. I'm lookin' for an opinion, Polk. Suppose a bank takes a mortgage on a piece of property. This property depreciates badly, but the bank is forced to take it over. The bank knows danged well that this property ain't worth nowhere near the amount of the mortgage, but they sells it for that amount, naturally leading the buyer to suppose that it is worth as much as when they gave the mortgage. What can the buyer do?"

Andrew Jackson Polk squinted at Hashknife, rubbed his own right ear industriously and shook his head.

"It looks to me like the buyer was stuck, suh."

"If the seller misrepresented the value?"

"He didn't do that, did he?"

"I dunno. Suppose he did?"

"Mm-m-m. That's different, suh. Offhand, I would say that the buyer seems to have grounds foh legal action."

"Much obliged," grinned Hashknife. They started to leave the room.

"In case of legal action, I am always at my office, suh."

"I'll remember that," said Hashknife seriously.

It was a few minutes later that the bank was opened by Parker Miller, and the two cowboys lost no time in entering therein. He called a cheery "hello" to them, gave some orders to the cashier and came back to see what they wanted.

"Well, what's new?" he asked.

"Nothin' much," admitted Hashknife. "We figured that you was through with our services; so we rode in early."

"Through with your services?" Miller did not seem to understand. "Just what do you mean, boys?"

"Well, since the bank sold the Diamond H—" began Hashknife.

"Sold the Diamond H?" Miller's serious expression was replaced by a smile. "What's the joke, Hartley?"

Hashknife squinted at Miller for a moment and nodded toward Miller's private office.

"Mebbe we better talk back there, Miller."

Miller closed the door behind them and waited for Hashknife to speak. It did not take him long to explain about Ma Holton. In fact Hashknife grew rather bitter in his narrative.

"But we haven't sold the ranch," protested Miller. "There is a mistake somewhere, Hartley. Wait a moment."

He stepped outside and called to Frank Laskey, who left his desk and came in the private office.

"What negotiations have ever been made toward selling the Diamond H?" asked Miller.

Laskey squinted thoughtfully. "None, except that letter from Mrs. Holton. I showed you that."

"Yes, I remember the letter. She wrote us, asking what had been done about the mortgage, I believe."

"I have her letter on file," said Laskey. "I wrote an answer, in which I told her that the legal time had elapsed and that the bank owned the Diamond H. I remember the incident very well. Shall I get her letter and a copy of my reply?"

"I wish yuh would," said Hashknife. Laskey looked at Miller, who nodded. They looked over her letter and the carbon copy of Lasky's reply, but there was nothing to gain from the letters.

"She said she paid ten thousand dollars for the ranch?" asked Miller.

"And interest," nodded Hashknife

"Did she say she had the mortgage?"

"That's what she said."

Frank Laskey brought in the original mortgage and Hashknife looked it over. There was no question that this was the genuine document. Laskey took it back to the vault. Hashknife squinted away from the smoke of his cigaret and looked at Miller. There was little question in his mind of Miller's honesty.

"This is goin' to be ——, Miller," said Hashknife sadly. "She thinks she's saved Uncle Billy from the poor-house, and all she's done is to buy a ticket there herself."

"It looks that way," said Miller gloomily. "Is she in her right mind, Hartley? You know what I mean, don't you? Perhaps she has worried about the old place so much that—well, it could happen."

Hashknife shook his head quickly. "Not that, Miller. She's as sane as we are. I

tell yuh, she's been hooked out of her money."

"Well, I'd like to see that mortgage, Hartley—if there is one."

Hashknife got to his feet and leaned against the table.

"Miller, I dunno how yuh feel about this matter. To tell her that she's been beat out of her money will just about kill both of 'em. They're gettin' old, Miller. My ——, they just set there and plan what they're goin' to do. Try to imagine what it means, can't yuh?"

"Yes, I think I can see your angle, Hartley."

"Then help me out. Ride out with us and see that mortgage. Don't let them know that it's phoney. Yo're payin' me and Sleepy fifty apiece per month. You keep that money, Miller. All we need is food. Let the old folks stay, will yuh? They tell me that a bank ain't got no feelin's, but you can feel, Miller."

"I don't know," faltered Miller. "They'd find out—"

"Mebby. Let's take a chance. It won't cost the bank anythin' to experiment."

"All right." Miller got to his feet. "I'll drive out there and see things for myself, Hartley. You could talk a Scotchman out of his religion. Come on."

"I'll take back what I came to say," grinned Hashknife.

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy arrived at the ranch ahead of Miller, who came with a horse and buggy. Ma Holton was cleaning house again, and Uncle Billy was helping her. The old ranch-house was beginning to look like a different place.

"I'm going to have roses again," she told Hashknife. "I used to have a lot of them in the front yard. Uncle Billy and I had a long talk about you two boys.

"We'll have to have help, you see. Until we get started it will be a little hard for us to pay you regular, but we'll make it somehow, if you'll stay. Of course, you may have other plans."

"Not a plan, Ma," assured Hashknife. Miller was driving up to the house.

"He said he was comin' up to see how yo're gettin' along," said Hashknife, as they went out to the front porch.

Miller shook hands with Ma and Uncle Billy and assured Ma that he was glad to see her back at the old ranch.

"You don't know what it means to us, Mr. Miller. Life has just started for us again."

"I—I see," he faltered. "Mrs. Holton, I'd like to see that mortgage again, if I may. I just want to be sure that it is all made out right."

"Why certainly. I'm sure we all want to be sure that it is all right."

She went in the house, where Uncle Billy had gone after some chairs, and the two cowboys thanked Miller in whispers.

"Forget it," smiled Miller. "I only hope it will all come out right in the end."

Uncle Billy carried out some chairs and placed them on the porch.

"Set down, folks," he urged. "Ma's cleanin' house, and yuh know what that means."

Uncle Billy's eye was still discolored and there was a slight swelling on his temple. Hashknife had not told Miller about the queer incident of the night before, but Miller paid no attention to the black eye. He took it for granted that the old man had been drunk and injured himself.

"You like the old ranch, don't you?" queried Miller.

"Like it?" Uncle Billy took a deep breath. "Yeah—I don't know jist what to say. I've jist been wonderin' if I don't feel like a bear does, when he comes out of his cave in the Spring and gets a whiff of fresh air and sees the sunshine. It shore is great to be alive—out here."

Ma Holton came to the doorway, a puzzled expression on her face.

"I can't find that mortgage," she said wonderingly. "It was in my bag—that and the bill-of-sale—and they're both gone. The bag was under the bed, and I left it in the bureau drawer. I saw the handle of it sticking out from under the bed."

She held the bag out for their inspection—empty. Miller and the two cowboys looked quickly at each other.

"That's what them fellers came to steal!" exploded Uncle Billy. "They stole yore papers, Ma!"

"What fellows?" asked Miller.

Hashknife examined the bag, gave it back to Ma and sat down to tell Miller what had happened the night before.

"But the bank knows that I bought it

and paid the money," said Ma, appealing to Miller, who nodded slowly.

"And they can give yuh another bill-of-sale, Ma." Uncle Billy patted her on the shoulder. "Them darned burglars stole worthless papers."

"Mrs. Holton, do you remember just who signed that bill-of-sale?" asked Miller.

"Besides you?" asked Ma.

"Well—yes—besides me."

"I think it was Mr. Green. He signed his name under your signature."

"I see, my signature was already on the bill-of-sale, was it?"

"Oh, yes. He said it was impossible for you to attend it, so you signed it before he left the bank. I don't see what anybody would do with it, because it wasn't worth anything to any one, except me."

"Not in the least," said Miller slowly. "Well, I will have to be getting back to the bank."

He shook hands with the old folks and walked out to his buggy, followed by Hashknife and Sleepy, while the old folks went back to their cleaning.

"I don't know what to make of it," declared Miller.

"You don't think she imagines all this, do yuh?" asked Hashknife.

"Not a bit of it. Her story is too straight for that, Hartley. If we had that mortgage and bill-of-sale we might have a chance to pin the crime on the guilty parties. But they were smart enough to steal the evidence."

"That's right."

"And we'll never be able to continue this deception," declared Miller.

"It won't cost yuh much to try it," said Hashknife. "You'd have to pay me and Sleepy a hundred per month, and it's a cinch that it won't take that much grub to keep the four of us. Send out a preacher or a justice of the peace and have 'em bring a blank marriage certificate. You can fix it, Miller. If they go to Medicine River, somebody might ruin the party."

Miller laughed and picked up his lines. "All right, Hartley. I'll see if it can be done."

"And if things break wrong, they can go to the poor-house together."

"That might not happen, if what the secretary of the Cattlemen's Association said about you was the truth, Hartley."

"Don't believe everythin' that whippoorwill tells yuh," laughed Hashknife, "He never told the truth about me yet."

AND Parker Miller was as good as his word. Supper was just over at the Diamond H, when they came trooping in: Parker Miller, Steve Morris, the justice of the peace, Allen Hogue, the county clerk, and "Cherokee" Lee, the tall, gaunt sheriff, who thought twice before speaking once.

They were all old timers in the Medicine River range. Miller had merely told them that Ma Holton had bought the Diamond H, and that Uncle Billy was not going to the poor-farm. There was so much to talk about that the oil was low in the lamps when the marriage license had been filled out and Steve Morris had stumbled through his first marriage service.

It was a queer ceremony, in the half-light of the old living-room; the old couple standing very straight and serious beside the center-table, while Morris, who was a bit near-sighted, held his book beneath the shade of the oil-lamp, as he spelled out the words that gave these old folks another chance to love, honor and obey each other again.

Hashknife listened, his mouth shut tight, his eyes suspiciously moist, while Sleepy closely examined a belt-buckle he had worn for seven years. As Steve Morris finished, Uncle Billy looked at Ma and said, his voice choking slightly—

"Yesterday I was goin' to the poor-farm —tomorrow I'm on my honeymoon."

And while the hand-shaking was in progress, Hashknife drew Parker Miller aside.

"I want to thank yuh, Miller," he said. "Yo're a white man."

"Don't thank me," said Miller. "I'm only accessory to a —— foolish game. I didn't know what it meant until just now—this idea of happiness."

"It is fun, kinda," smiled Hashknife. "Yuh won't never show a money profit, Miller."

Cherokee Lee came to Hashknife and held out his hand.

"I ain't never met yuh, Hartley," he said slowly. "Howdy."

"Howdy, Sheriff."

"Best weddin' I ever seen—'cept m' own. Got buck fever. Had the ring in m' mouth and swallered the —— thing, and then I got shot twice in the laigs with bird-shot durin' the shivaree. They said it was accidental, but I dunno. My girl shore was craved by quite a few fellers. Haw, haw, haw, haw!"

"It sure was providential for Uncle Billy," said Morris, as the four men rode back to Medicine River. "We waited the stage for half an hour this morning, but nobody knew where he had gone. And I'm glad, gentlemen; glad that it all happened this way. And it gave me a chance to get over the buck-fever of marrying some one. That part of my job has always worried me."

"Do yuh reckon they'll get along all right?" asked Cherokee Lee. "Yuh know, Park, that ranch ain't noways self-supportin'."

"Let's not worry about that," said Miller. He did not want to answer questions, and he had a feeling that as soon as every one heard what Ma Holton had paid for the ranch he would be censured severely. But he was willing to play the game to an end.

II

THE following morning Hashknife and Sleepy saddled their horses and rode away from the Diamond H. Hashknife was curious to find out approximately how many head of Diamond H cattle were left in the hills, and he also wanted to get away where he would have plenty of room to think about things.

"I feel like a danged thief and a liar every time I look at them old folks," declared Sleepy. "I don't like this deal."

"If yuh think I do, yo're crazy," said Hashknife. "I never seen two people as happy as they are. Act like a pair of kids. Oh, well, it's just another case of what yuh don't know won't hurt yuh."

"But it sure is hard on the innocent bystander, Hashknife."

"We're not innocent, Sleepy. We're as guilty as ——. Parker Miller is guilty along with us. There's a reg'lar man—Miller. He'll prob'ly have to account to the stockholders as soon as this report gets circulated, but he's game to play with us."

"Yeah, that's right, Hashknife. This is just another deal where we'll pull out with less than we had when we went in. When we get old, I hope to gosh we'll be surrounded by a lot of —— fools like us. I like half-witted cowpunchers."

"Don't get vain," advised Hashknife. "Next thing I know you'll be puttin' corn starch on yore face after shavin', and knock out a front tooth so yuh can lisp."

They grinned together and headed for the tops of the ridges, looking for cattle wearing the Diamond H mark, but there were few. In three hours search they counted twenty head. Their ride had brought them to the west of Medicine River, so they decided to ride down and see what they might hear in town.

Parker Miller's first duty that morning was to take Frank Laskey, the cashier, into his confidence. He knew that Laskey would hear of the sale and probably deny it. Laskey was an undersized, pale-faced person, slightly round-shouldered from leaning over a desk-top.

Miller explained the deal to Laskey, who seemed surprized that Miller would enter any such agreement, but agreed to do his part.

"I won't deny it," said Laskey. "I wondered if there wasn't something wrong about that mortgage. But you won't be able to keep this secret very long, Mr. Miller. The stockholders—"

"The stockholders be ——!"

"Yes, sir."

"Frank, did you ever hear of Hashknife Hartley?"

Laskey squinted thoughtfully and shook his head.

"No, sir. That tall cowboy is named Hartley, but I have never heard his given name."

"Well, that's Hashknife Hartley, Frank. Did you ever read 'Sherlock Holmes'?"

"Detective stories? Oh, yes, I've read a few. Do you mean that Hartley is a detective?"

"They tell me—"Miller smiled and leaned back in his chair—"they tell me that Hartley started in where Holmes left off."

Laskey smiled and adjusted his tie.

"Possibly."

"Probably," corrected Miller. "Anyway, Frank, we'll wait and see."

Laskey went back to his work which amounts to considerable in a cow-town bank where the cashier does the work of paying teller, receiving teller and the other things which are handled by departments in the big banking institutions.

Hashknife and Sleepy rode in and tied their horses to the War Paint hitch-rack. Several other horses were nodding at the rack, indolently switching their tails at the flies and trying to get their heads in the meager shade afforded by the top-pole of the rack.

There were several cowboys in the saloon, where a fair-sized poker game was in progress, but none of them paid any attention to Hashknife and Sleepy, who sat down against the wall to have a smoke.

"I hear that ol' lady Holton done bought the Diamond H," said one of the players.

"Yeah," drawled the dealer, "and that ain't all. Last night Steve Morris went out and married her to the old man agin. It kinda looks like the old ranch was comin' back onto the map."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Yakima Reed and Chuck Allard. They were both drunk. Yakima was boisterous, but Chuck seemed rather unnerved from his potations.

"Yah-hoo-o-o!" screamed Yakima. "We are the people and we must be respected! Gimme a drink, before I wreck the place."

"Aw, don't yell," advised Chuck.

"C'mere!" Yakima grasped Chuck by the arm and nearly tore his sleeve off. "Don't tell me what t' do, you—you—aw, I can't think of what yuh are right now. Have a drink."

Yakima invited those at the poker game to have a drink with him and, while they advanced to the bar, Hashknife and Sleepy went back to the street and crossed toward the bank. Andrew Jackson Polk was coming out of the bank and nodded to them.

"How's law and order?" asked Hashknife, grinning.

"All right, suh. I hear you-all had a marriage at yo' ranch last evenin'."

"Yeah, we did. You should 'a' been there."

Polk laughed and nodded.

"It would have been interesting. But no one told me."

As Polk started toward his office, which was the next building from the bank, Yakima Reed and Chuck Allard came from the saloon and started toward them. Polk merely glanced at them and walked on, but Yakima yelled at him—

"Hey! Polk! I'll buy yuh a drink!"

"No, I thank yo', suh."

Yakima laughed and they came on across the street, while Polk went into his office.

"He won't drink with us, Chuck," complained Yakima. "Lawyers are too dignified to drink with a cow-hand. F'r a plugged dime, I'd go and make him drink with me."

"Aw, let him alone." Chuck did not seem to be looking for trouble. "Let's go and get somethin' to eat."

"Aw-w-w right. How do-o-o." Yakima nodded to Hashknife and almost lost his balance.

"How are yuh?" grinned Hashknife. Yakima was a cadaverous specimen of the genus cowboy, loose-jointed, unkempt. A lock of tow-colored hair hung below the band of his sombrero and interfered with his vision.

"I'm jus' right," declared Yakima belligerently. " 'F I was any better I'd have to be held."

Hashknife turned away, realizing that Yakima was just in the proper condition to start trouble, and he had no desire to fight with the drunken cowpuncher. As Hashknife turned away, Parker Miller came out of the bank and called him aside.

"Go down to the store," said Miller. "I've given Jim Leeds orders to fill your wants, and he's put up a bunch of staples. Might hire a livery-rig to take them out with. Find out from Mrs. Holton just what she wants, and tell her that the Diamond H credit is good at the grocery store. I suppose they'll need credit."

"That's sure good of yuh," nodded Hashknife. Yakima and Chuck had gone to the front of Polk's office and were arguing between themselves.

"Miller," said Hashknife, "have yuh any idea who Green might be—the feller who signed that bill-of-sale?"

"No. I was afraid to ask too many questions last night. Maybe you can get a description. Have you got anything to work on?"

"Not much. It kinda hinges on Green. I'll see if I can find out what he looked like and let yuh know."

"All right, Hartley, good luck."

He went back in the bank and the two cowboys sauntered down to the store, which was on the same side of the street. Jim Leeds, the storekeeper, nodded pleasantly and indicated several boxes of stuff.

"Miller said to fix up a lot of staple stuff," he said. "If yuh can think of anythin' I've overlooked, just say so."

Hashknife examined the articles. Miller had not been stingy in his order.

"Looks like enough to feed an army," grinned Hashknife. "I know we're short of food out there and this will fix us up in fine shape. Thank yuh very much."

"Let's buy a can of salmon, some crackers and a can of peaches," suggested Sleepy. "I don't want no restaurant cookin'."

"Suits me," nodded Hashknife.

THEY opened the cans and ate off the counter, while Jim Leeds talked to them of the Medicine River range. There had never been any serious trouble in that part of the country, it seemed.

"Didja ever know a feller by the name of Green?" asked Hashknife. "Used to work in the bank here, I think."

"Green? Nope. Never worked in the Medicine River bank. I've been here since the town started twenty-five years ago and there ain't been no Green workin' in that bank."

"Mebbe I'm mistaken in the name."

"Must be. Park Miller was cashier for about twelve years. Old Ase Wheeler died and they made Park the president. That was three years ago. They hired Frank Laskey for cashier."

"Miller is a nice feller," said Sleepy, spearing in the can for the last peach.

"Best there is," nodded Leeds. "Clean as a hound's tooth. Want more crackers?"

"Nope," said Sleepy, waving them aside. "Loaded to the gills."

"Yuh ought to be," said Hashknife, "yuh ate most all them peaches. Well, I reckon we better hire a rig to haul all that plunder out to the ranch, Sleepy."

"I s'pose. I'd rather set in the shade now and dream of a time when I'll have money enough to eat canned peaches three times a day. I'd sure make a peach-eatin' millionaire."

Sleepy slid off the counter and stooped to dust the cracker crumbs off his clothes when he suddenly straightened at the sound of a muffled shot, or what seemed to be the report of a gun.

"What was that?" he asked.

"I dunno." Leeds squinted thoughtfully. "Might have been a shot. Shucks, some cowpuncher is always drillin' a hole in the floor at the War Paint. Makes a good vent for scrub-water."

Hashknife walked to the doorway and looked across the street at the War Paint. Everything looked peaceable. As he turned back they heard some one shouting in the street.

It was Frank Laskey and he was halfway across the street to the War Paint, when the three men reached the door, running and looking back toward the bank.

"Somethin' wrong at the bank!" snapped Hashknife. "C'mon."

They ran up the sidewalk and were almost to the bank when several men came running from the saloon, headed by Laskey, who was yelling something about a hold-up.

Hashknife, Sleepy and Leeds halted, while from Polk's office came Polk and the two drunken cowboys. The men all crowdd in through the bank door. Hashknife managed to squeeze in behind Laskey.

There was an odor of powder smoke in the air. Park Miller was seated at his desk, sprawled forward, his head buried in his arms. Hashknife vaulted the railing and went to him. The room was in an uproar, as the crowd questioned Laskey.

Parker Miller was dead. It did not take Hashknife long to determine this, and he held up his hand to stop the crowd from coming inside the railed-off space.

"Miller is dead," he told the crowd. "Stay where you are until the sheriff comes. C'mere, Laskey."

Laskey was all out of breath, trembling with excitement, but he came willingly.

"Everybody keep still and let him tell his story," said Hashknife. "You'll never get it straight this way."

"They came in the back door, I guess," panted Laskey. "No one was here, except Miller and myself. There was two men. I think there was three, but the other stayed with the horses. They were masked.

"I didn't see them until one stuck a gun in my face. The other had a gun pointed at Miller. They told me to hand over all the money I had. Just a few minutes before that Miller had told me to fix up a package of currency which was to be expressed to Cheyenne. They got it all.

"I tried to hide it, but it wasn't any use. I don't know how much they got, but it was quite a lot. I couldn't see what Miller did, but I heard one of them tell him to keep his hands on the table, and then I heard the shot.

"I thought they were going to shoot me, too, so I dropped on the floor as they ran out the rear door. Then I ran across the street and gave the alarm."

Laskey was panting and clinging to the railing as he finished his breathless tale.

"What makes yuh think there was three of 'em?" asked Hashknife.

"There was some silver," said Laskey. "One of them said that it was too heavy, but the other said, 'Aw, ——, the three of us can take care of it.' "

At this juncture Cherokee Lee came in and shoved his way through the crowd. He went straight to Miller and lifted his head. The blue hole in the middle of the forehead told its own story. The sheriff turned to Laskey.

"Talk a little, Frank," he said softly.

As swiftly as possible the nervous cashier repeated his story.

"Aw, what the ——!" snorted a cowboy. "While all this story-tellin' is goin' on them three —— are headin' into the hills."

Hashknife squinted at the crowd. The two drunken cowboys seemed to have sobered, and Cherokee Lee had no trouble in gathering a sufficient posse for his needs. He did not swear nor lift his voice above his usual soft drawl as he told the boys to get their horses and go with him.

Hashknife and Sleepy did not offer to go, and the sheriff did not ask them. Every one seemed shocked at the murder of Parker Miller and the people of the town thronged the sidewalk in front of the bank while the doctor made his examination.

Andrew Jackson Polk was so excited that he legged his way across to the War Paint and bought himself a drink: Which was an unusual thing for him to do in the middle of the day.

"I heard the shot," he told Hashknife and Sleepy. "I was havin' an argument with those two drunken cowboys. They insisted on me having a drink with them. It sounded as though some one had struck the side of my office."

"Do yuh think the sheriff will catch 'em?" queried the bartender.

"I hope so," said Hashknife. "They evidently had their getaway all planned out, and they sure had plenty of time to slide out of sight. Was Miller a married man?"

"No suh." The drink had calmed Polk. "It is a fortunate thing that he had no dependents."

"Well, it sure is a terrible thing," said the bartender. "Miller was awful well liked by everybody."

"Not everybody," said Hashknife. "They shot him down without giving him a chance, shot him at his desk, when his hands were in sight. I tell yuh, they'll pay for that piece of work. They may dodge the sheriff and all that, but they'll make a slip."

"The perfect criminal doesn't live," said Polk wisely. "They make a mistake somewhere. Those men secured a lot of money, it seems. It is unlikely that they are men who can stand to have a fortune and not spend it unwisely. My theory would be to watch for three men, or, possibly one or two men, who are exhibiting too much money."

"No, they can't stand prosperity," agreed Hashknife. "Are there plenty of hidin' places back in the hills around here?"

"There must be, if yuh know the country," said the bartender. "It's all hills and brush."

"And they wasn't takin' many chances by comin' in the back door," mused Hashknife. "They could look out the big windows and see any one comin'. Prob'ly some one who has planned it a long time."

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy crossed the street with Polk and stopped in front of his office. The doctor and three other men were removing Miller's body from the bank, while a curious crowd looked on.

Hashknife walked down between Polk's office and the bank. It was an alley, about ten feet wide. The rear door of the bank was almost in the center of the rear wall. To the right was a high tight-board fence which enclosed the rear of the general store.

To the left was the rear of Polk's office, and beyond that was the rear of the stage-office, a small corral and a stable. Almost in a direct line with the alley, and about two hundred yards away, was the rear of a large stable, a corral, and beyond that was a small cottage.

There was plenty of room for the bandits to have made their getaway. Not a fence barred their way to the hills beyond the town, where numerous, brushy cañons would give them a cover. But there was nothing out there to give any idea of which way the men had gone, so Hashknife went back to the street where he found Sleepy listening to Andrew Jackson Polk reciting the murder to a newcomer. The drink had caused Andrew to become eloquent, and he pictured the tragedy with appropriate gestures. In fact, he even attempted to imitate the sound of the gun.

Laskey had accompanied the body to the doctor's office, but now he came back and unlocked the bank. Hashknife and Sleepy followed him inside. Laskey was completely unnerved and did not seem to know what he was doing.

"You better lock up and go home," advised Hashknife. "Yo're shakin' like a leaf, Laskey."

"I know it. Do you think they'll catch those men?"

"Mebby. Do yuh remember enough about 'em to give me any kind of a description?"

"No, I don't think so. They were masked you know."

"Yeah. Why do yuh reckon they shot Miller?"

"I don't know. Maybe he tried to get a gun. The man told him to keep his hands on the desk."

"Uh-huh. Did Miller have any enemies, Laskey?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Do yuh usually keep the back door open?"

"Not always. It was awful hot in here today; so I opened it to let the breeze blow through. I meant to close it, but I was busy."

"Uh-huh. Did Miller tell yuh about the Diamond H ranch?"

"Yes—this morning. I promised to keep still about it."

"Makes it look kinda bad now, eh?"

"I don't know what will happen now. I'm so nervous I can't even think straight. Maybe I better lock up and go home."

"Good scheme," agreed Hashknife.

They left Laskey and went to the livery-stable, where they secured a rig. Leeds helped them load the stuff in the wagon and they went back to the ranch, leading their saddle-horses behind the wagon.

"This sure is ——," complained Sleepy. "Kinda puts our scheme in the hole, cowboy."

"It sure looks thataway, Sleepy. With Miller alive we had a chance to keep goin' for a while, but I'm kinda scared that our cake is all dough right now. But don't let the old folks know."

CHEROKEE LEE and his posse scoured the Medicine River hills, but without success. It was a big country, and they had no idea which direction the bank robbers had taken in their flight from town.

The death of Parker Miller was a big blow to every one, as he was known far and wide and liked by all the folks of the cattle country. Morton Anderson, of Rangervill, the biggest stockholder of the Medicine River bank, took charge of the institution, but retained Frank Laskey.

Anderson was a hard-headed business man and sentiment had no part on his views of life. Hashknife had a talk with him about the Diamond H and found that Anderson had not been told about Ma Holton's purchase.

"The bank will take the loss," said Anderson curtly. "We will sell at the first opportunity, but of course we know that the ranch is not worth the amount of the mortgage."

"And that's the fly in the axle-grease," Hashknife told Sleepy. "Anderson don't know yet."

Uncle Billy had come to town in the buckboard after the mail and he came to Hashknife.

"I wonder if we can round up about fifty head of stock and have 'em in the pasture by next Wednesday?" he asked.

Hashknife squinted down at him, wondering what was coming next.

"I jist got a letter from Joe Ables," explained Uncle Billy. "He's a buyer from Chicago and he's bought from me before. Said he'd be here at that time and wanted to make me a price on that many head."

"Fifty head?" Hashknife scratched his long nose. He knew that Uncle Billy would have to know at least part of the deception.

"Uncle Billy, I hate to have to tell yuh this, but you've got to know," he said slowly. "There ain't over thirty head of Diamond H cattle left, and most of 'em are runts and old cows."

Uncle Billy gawped at him, "Why—why—what do yuh mean?"

"Just that, Uncle Billy. The last year you ran that ranch, somebody stole yuh blind. I reckon yuh was so busy drinkin' liquor and playin' poker that you didn't know nor care. While you was wearin' out that ten thousand dollar mortgage, somebody was takin' all yore stock."

"Yo're jokin' me, ain't yuh, Hashknife?"

"I wish I was, old-timer. The bank knows."

"Yeah?" Uncle Billy blinked painfully. It seemed incredible. Yet he knew that Hashknife was not lying.

"And Ma bought—" He looked at Hashknife. "They sold her that ranch, Hashknife. By ——, they knew they was beatin' her. Say, I'm goin' over to that bank and—"

"Not now, Uncle Billy."

"Right now! Why, that's downright robbery, I tell yuh."

"Wait a minute," begged Hashknife. "You can't do a thing by goin' over there. I've got a scheme, Uncle Billy, and that would ruin it. You keep still about this. Don't even tell ma. If you let anybody know about this, it'll ruin everythin'."

"You've got a scheme? All right. But jist the same they—"

"Do this for me, Uncle Billy. I'm for yuh—yuh and ma. Please."

"Well, all right," he conceded grudgingly. "I don't *sabe* it, but I'm willin' to keep my mouth shut. But lemme tell yuh somethin': I'm shore—"

"That's fine; so am I. Now let's forget it. It's a secret, eh?"

"If you say so, Hashknife. But —— it, I'd like to know where all them cattle went."

"You quit worryin' about that," advised Hashknife, "and for gosh sake, don't let ma know."

"No, we've got to keep it away from her," admitted the old man. "I won't say a word."

It was with relief that they watched the old man drive out of town. They felt sure that he would not tell Ma Holton.

"We're slippin', cowboy," said Sleepy. "Somethin' is goin' to break pretty soon. If yo're such a danged good detective, why in —— don'tcha detect somethin'?"

"What can be done?" grinned Hashknife. "Gimme somethin' to work on."

"I ain't got nothin'."

"Then don't chide me, feller; I'm just human. Here comes that disciple of Blackstone."

Andrew Jackson Polk was strolling down the sidewalk, picking his teeth diligently. He had eaten an early supper, it seemed.

"Hyah, judge," greeted Hashknife.

"Evenin, suh, evenin'," he nodded pleasantly. "How is everything at the Diamond H?"

"Finer than frawg-hair," grinned Hashknife. "How's yore business these days?"

"Just faih, thank yo'. I see that ouah estimable sheriff has just ridden in. I suppose he is still hunting fo' the miscreants who robbed the bank."

"I reckon so," nodded Hashknife. "But I guess he ain't havin' much luck."

"No, suh, they seem to have made good their escape."

"For a while," said Hashknife.

"Yo' evidently believe in the theory that murder will out."

"It's a cinch, Polk. If it had been done by one man, I'd say he had a reasonable chance for escape."

"I see. Yo' think that one of them will make a slip?"

"I think they have."

Polk squinted closely at Hashknife

"Yo' think they have?"

Hashknife nodded. Polk cleared his throat and smiled widely.

"It would be interesting to know in what way, Mr. Hartley."

"Yeah, it prob'ly would," Hashknife grinned softly. "Mebbe I'll tell yuh one of these days."

"I see. Yo' have whetted my curiosity, Mr. Hartley, and I would like to buy a drink. Will you join me, gentlemen?"

"If yuh won't ask questions," smiled Hashknife. "Don't try to get me drunk enough to talk, Polk."

"Oh, not at all, I assure yo'. While I am curious, I am also willing to let yo' tell me when yo' are ready."

"Well, that's pretty reasonable for a lawyer," laughed Hashknife.

They had their drink, but nothing more was said regarding the murder and robbery. Hashknife and Sleepy walked over to Polk's office and sat down to enjoy a smoke.

Polk's office was a large room, partitioned through the center, which gave him living-quarters in the rear half. His furniture was meager, consisting of an old roll-top desk, a few chairs, an antiquated book-case, filled with miscellaneous law-books, and a small safe.

His living quarters was furnished with a small stove, table, two chairs and a single bed. There was one big window at the rear and a rear exit on the left side of the room. There was still enough cooking odors left to prove that Andrew Jackson Polk liked onions.

"I suppose you get quite a lot of legal work, eh?" said Hashknife, after their smokes were going good.

"At times, suh."

"Did yuh ever know a feller named Green around here?"

"Green? No, suh—not here."

"Uh-huh."

The talk drifted to common gossip of the range and in a short time Hashknife and

Sleepy sauntered back to the War Paint where a sizable poker game was in progress. There was one vacant chair at the table and Hashknife decided to test his luck.

YAKIMA REED was winning steadily and frowned when Hashknife bought a supply of chips. Yakima realized that another hand in the game would possibly change the run of the cards. There were two other cattlemen besides the dealer in the game, and Hashknife knew that they were not playing for pastime.

Five dollar jack-pots is a stiff game, and Hashknife played cautiously. There was no limit. Twice, hand-running, Yakima Reed fought out the pot with Hashknife, only to find that Hashknife held the winning cards. Each time he had forced Hashknife to bet all of his chips.

"What the —— good is a limit, when the other feller is short of money?" he demanded. "Yuh can't scare anybody with a hundred dollars."

"Were you tryin' to scare me?" asked Hashknife innocently. "I didn't know it."

The other players grinned and it angered Yakima.

"I'll make yuh play cards," growled Yakima, opening the next pot for twenty-five dollars. It was merely a coincidence that Hashknife was the only player to stay with Yakima.

Yakima drew one card. Hashknife studied his hand for several moments, adjusting the sequences of the cards.

"I forgot to ask when I bought into this game," he said. "Do yuh play straights and flushes?"

The dealer nodded, holding the pack ready to deal Hashknife his draw cards.

"Well, I'll play these," said Hashknife indifferently.

Yakima squinted narrowly at Hashknife. It was poor poker policy to bet against a pat hand, but Yakima had caught a trey, which gave him three treys and a pair of jacks. He wondered if Hashknife did have a straight or a flush, or was he bluffing.

"You opened it," reminded Hashknife.

Yakima bet twenty-five.

"Must 'a' helped," mused Hashknife aloud. "Drew to two pair, or held a kicker to a set of threes. Let's make it an even hundred."

Yakima grinned, shoved in seventy-five more and began counting out another stack of blue chips. He flirted ten of them in to the pot and leaned back.

"Hundred more, eh?" Hashknife grinned, called the bet and added his remaining chips.

"Do any of you fellers know where I'll find a man named Green?" asked Hashknife. The players looked at him. Yakima had started to count out chips enough to call Hashknife's last bet, but now he picked up his cards and squinted closely at them.

"Never heard of a Green around here," said the dealer.

"That's funny," said Hashknife. "I was told he was around here."

Yakima looked at the pot, gnawed at the corner of his lips for a moment and threw his hand into the discard.

"It was a fool thing for me to ask about straights and flushes," said Hashknife rather mournfully, as he drew in the pot, "But I had to be sure."

Yakima growled angrily.

"All right, all right. I know that kind of talk. But I didn't have anythin' myself." Yakima lied to cover his reasons for not calling Hashknife's last bet, instead of admitting that he was afraid that Hashknife was holding a straight flush.

"Didn't yuh have anythin'?" laughed Hashknife. "Shucks! I thought I stole a pot, and I had yuh beat all the time."

He turned over his cards, exposing a pair of deuces. Yakima swallowed heavily and shoved his chips over to the dealer. Two deuces against his trey-full!

"Quittin'?" asked Hashknife pleasantly.

"Yeah, by ——! I can't play against that kind of luck."

"Luck, nothin'. You didn't have anythin'."

"All right," Yakima cashed in his chips and turned to the bar. The other players smiled covertly. Yakima had been having a run of luck and they were not sorry to see him leave. Sleepy was at the bar, trying to operate a nickel-in-the slot box, but with little success.

"Have a drink," invited Yakima.

"I'd just as soon," Sleepy grinned and gave the music-box a parting slap of his hand.

"That thing is busted," said the bartender.

"So'm I," said Sleepy seriously. "I've

put three nickels in the darned thing. Gimme a see-gar."

"What's the matter with the liquor?" queried Yakima.

"I dunno," innocently. "I'm no chemist."

"I don't care to buy cigars for anybody."

"I'll take this in place of the music," Sleepy told the bartender, and went back to tinker with the box.

Chuck Allard came in and joined Yakima. He had been drinking.

"How'ja come out?" queried Chuck.

"Ne'mind how I come out." Yakima swallowed a big drink of liquor. The loss of that big pot had left him very sour against every one.

"Yuh quit winner, didn't yuh?"

"Did I? All right, if you know so —— much about it."

"Been all right, if yuh hadn't got scared." This from Sleepy, who still tried to induce the box to function.

Yakima turned and squinted at Sleepy.

"Got scared, eh?"

"Panicky—yea-a-ah—panicky."

Yakima moved closer to Sleepy and looked at him intently. Yakima Reed was known to have a hair-trigger disposition. The man who was dealing at the poker game stopped his distribution and watched the three men at the bar. As far as they could see, Sleepy was paying no attention to Yakima.

"Got scared, did I?" repeated Yakima. "Do you know what I think of you, feller?"

Sleepy shook his head, as he tinkered with the slot.

"Pers'nal opinions never interested me, pardner; they're prejudiced. If you had an opinion from several folks I might care to listen. I wish my folks had educated me in mechanics. I've got fifteen cents in—"

"—— you! Listen to me!" Yakima advanced on Sleepy, who looked sidewise at him.

"All right," said Sleepy pleasantly. "Whatcha goin' to do—sing?"

"I'll sing you to sleep!"

Yakima spoke as he drew back his right fist and drove it at Sleepy's head. But Sleepy was not unprepared, even if he did seem to be, and the fist only met space—and the corner of the music-box.

Yakima jerked back his hand, the knuckles badly cut, his arm almost paralyzed. It took the fight out of him, at least for the moment, and as he hugged his fist under his left elbow, his face grimacing with pain, the music-box began playing the "Washington Post March."

Sleepy had stepped back, watching Yakima closely, but now he grinned widely.

"Ain't that pretty?" he asked everybody. "That feller—" indicating the suffering Yakima—"is a born mechanic."

Yakima swore feelingly, but the fight was all taken out of him. His right hand dropped to the butt of his holstered gun, but he drew it away quickly, realizing that it was in no shape to grip a gun-butt.

"Everythin' is goin' to be left-handed with yuh for a while," said Sleepy solemnly. "But yuh sure did wake up that music-box, and I'm obliged to yuh."

YAKIMA left the War Paint, walking stiffly on his high-heels, his shoulders hunched, and with Chuck Allard trailing behind.

"You got out of it pretty lucky," confided the bartender.

"Out of what?" Sleepy stopped whistling with the music.

"Why, out of your fight with Yakima Reed."

"Fight?" Sleepy screwed up his face wonderingly. "I never had any fight."

"Well, you—" The bartender rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"You must 'a' been seein' things," said Sleepy. "Didja ever have yore tonsils and adenoids tended to?"

"My what?"

"Yore medulla oblongata."

"I dunno what you're talkin' about."

"You ought to be examined."

"What for?"

"Oh, just make it kinda general."

Sleepy went back to the pool-table and began playing alone, while the bartender looked at himself in the back-bar mirror and wondered if there was any truth in what Sleepy had said.

It was about an hour later that Hashknife cashed in his chips and declared he was going to have something to eat. He was about two hundred dollars ahead of the game, but promised that he would come back and win some more.

In the meantime Yakima and Chuck had been sojourning at the Medicine River bar where the bartender had dosed Yakima's hand with iodine and bandaged it. And

that, together with numerous and sundry drinks, had caused Yakima to forget everything except his hatred of a man who played a pair of deuces as hard as any man should play a full house, and of a man who did not have sense enough to know when he had a fight on his hands.

"You better leave 'em alone," advised Chuck. "They're *hyas cultus*, I tell yuh."

"They inshulted me," declared Yakima.

He had shifted his gun to his left side, but had been forced to reverse his holster, which put the gun between the belt and his thigh.

"Listen t' me," said Chuck. "You ain't no good with yore left hand, Yak; and yo're drunk, to boot."

"Thasso?" Yakima rocked on his heels and lifted his eyebrows wisely. "Lemme tell yuh, I'm not drunk—and I'm good with either hand. C'mon and see me do it."

"Good-by." The bartender offered his hand across the bar. "I've heard about them two fellers. Cherokee Lee and Parker Miller was in here one day and I heard 'em talkin'."

"I'll run my own business," declared Yakima.

"I'm not interferin' with yuh," assured the bartender. "You've been a good customer of mine, and I wish yuh well."

"Aw ——!" Yakima turned to Chuck. "Yo're with me, ain'tcha?"

"Well, yeah, I—I'm goin' with yuh, Yak."

"Yo're goin' to back my play, ain'tcha?"

"Well, it's like thish, Yakie. Yuh shee, they never insulted me and I—I ain't so very mad at anybody. And I'm drunk. Yesshir, I'm too drunk to fight for anybody but me—and I ain't mad. Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, c'mon, you laughin' hyener. C'mon and see me clean house with the War Paint."

They staggered outside, weaving their erratic way up the narrow sidewalk to the War Paint, where Chuck stepped aside and let Yakima go in first. The music-box was stilled and all interest seemed to be in the poker-game.

But there was no sign of Hashknife and Sleepy. The bartender came from watching the game and wanted to serve them, but Yakima waved him aside.

"Where's them two gobblers?" he demanded to know.

"Which ones?" asked the bartender.

"Hartley and Stevens."

"Oh, they went to eat supper, Yakima. Probably be back pretty soon. They've been gone quite a while now."

"We'll wait," said Yakima.

Cherokee Lee and his deputy, Bill Stivers, a heavy-set, square-faced young man, came in. Yakima invited them to have a drink, which invitation was accepted. They had been riding in the hills, still trying to discover the hiding-place of the men who had killed Parker Miller.

Cherokee noticed Yakima's bandaged hand and remarked about it.

"Yakima had a terrific fight," declared Chuck. "Oh, it was jus' somethin' awful, sheriff."

Yakima scowled and tried to make Chuck keep still, but he failed. So Cherokee Lee heard of how Yakima missed Sleepy's head and started the music-box. Cherokee smiled softly and advised Yakima to leave those two cowpunchers alone.

"That's what I've been tellin' him," declared Chuck.

"I'll run m' own business," said Yakima darkly.

"All right," drawled Cherokee. "Try and not have anybody behind yuh when trouble busts, Ya-a-akima. You ain't thick enough to stop a forty-five, and I notice that's the size them two jiggers are packin'."

Yakima accepted another drink and sat down against the wall to wait for Hashknife and Sleepy. It was another case of the spirit being strong, but the flesh weak; and Yakima Reed obeyed the call of the sandman. Chuck Allard laughed gleefully and challenged Bill Stivers to a game of pool, but went to sleep in a chair, after his first shot, with the billiard-cue clasped in his arms.

Hashknife and Sleepy came back from their supper and shook hands with Cherokee Lee who introduced to them Bill Stivers. The four of them sat down at a vacant table and the sheriff told of his wasted efforts.

"We've combed every inch of these hills," swore Cherokee. "Them jiggers sure didn't hole up in the Medicine River country. Me and Bill know this country as well as any man here."

"You liked Parker Miller, didn't yuh?" asked Hashknife.

"The best," said Cherokee softly. "The bank offers five thousand dollars for the murderers, dead or alive, and the county adds another thousand. But it don't look like anybody will collect."

"Why do yuh reckon they killed Miller, Sheriff?"

"I dunno, Hartley. Laskey said they told Miller to keep his hands where they were. Mebbe they thought he was reachin' for a gun."

"He didn't have any gun in reach. They shot him square between the eyes, and his arms were on the desk. Sheriff, he never moved, except to fall forward."

"Yeah, I noticed that. What does it mean to you?"

Hashknife shook his head slowly.

"It just made me wonder."

Cherokee studied Hashknife for several moments. Finally, leaning across the table and lowering his voice—

"Hartley, what do you know about this?"

"I don't know a thing, Sheriff."

"Uh-huh. Miller told me that you had a reputation as a range detective, and I was kinda hopin' that you'd find somethin'. But this deal don't offer much for a feller to work on."

"No, it sure don't, Sheriff."

THEIR conversation was interrupted by an exclamation from one of the poker-players, and they looked around to see Andrew Jackson Polk staggering in past the bar. He was dressed, or rather undressed, in a faded suit of red flannel underclothes and carrying a brown derby hat in his right hand.

His hair was disheveled and he seemed dazed, as he braced one hand against the bar and stared around.

"Drunk and dressed up!" snorted Bill Stivers, as they got up and started toward Polk.

"Say! What's the matter with you, Polk?" asked the bartender.

Andrew Jackson Polk felt of his head, which seemed rather tender to the touch, and blinked painfully.

"I—I got knocked down and robbed," he croaked.

"Have a drink?" asked the bartender.

Polk nodded. The men watched him gulp down a big drink and waited for him to speak. Chuck Allard awoke. He blinked at Polk and got unsteadily to his feet, staring at the queer looking lawyer.

"Thasall ri'," nodded Chuck foolishly. His hat fell off his head, but he made no effort to recover it. And, without taking his eyes off Andrew Jackson Polk, he walked unsteadily out of the saloon, talking softly to himself.

Cherokee Lee came in close to Polk and took him by the arm.

"What's the matter with you, Polk?" he asked.

"I've been knocked down and robbed," he declared hoarsely.

"Tell us about it," said the dealer of the poker game.

Polk gulped thirstily and caressed his head, where a swelling the size of an egg was plainly visible.

"I—I was in bed," he said. "I went to bed early. My window was open. Something woke me up and I heard some one outside the window call my name. I got up and went to the window where I stuck my head out to see who wanted me."

"And somebody petted yuh with a club, eh?" supplied Sleepy.

"I—I didn't see what they had," said Polk. "Something hit me, I know that. And when I awoke I was lying on my bed."

"Walked in his sleep and hit his head," said Stivers.

"No, suh!" Polk was indignant. "My safe was wide open."

Several men came in, followed by Chuck Allard, and all gazed curiously at Andrew Jackson Polk, except Chuck, who seemed afraid to trust his eyes.

"Chuck came to the Medicine River saloon and told us that somethin' was wrong down here," laughed one of the men.

"He said if there wasn't he was through drinkin'," laughed another of the newcomers.

Chuck goggled at Polk for a moment and began laughing. He was greatly relieved.

"Yore safe was wide open," prompted Cherokee. "Mebby yuh left it open."

"No, suh!" Polk squinted around, and for the first time he seemed to realize how he looked.

"I—I must be dreaming," he said thickly.

"I reckon yuh are," agreed Cherokee. "That's what I had in mind all the time, Polk. You better go back to bed before yuh catch cold."

"Yeah, suh, I—I better."

He shuffled outside, while the crowd laughed boisterously. It was surely a good joke on Andrew Jackson Polk, and the bartender invited every one to partake of the War Paint's hospitality.

Yakima Reed awoke when Chuck bumped his head against the wall, but hardly knew what it was all about.

"Lemme 'lone," he grunted. "I'm all ri', I tell yuh."

"Git up, yuh sleepin' beauty," demanded Chuck.

Yakima roused sufficiently to get out of his chair. He did not want another drink and he proceeded to tell the whole wide world that he didn't.

"Thasall right," agreed Chuck, pulling Yakima's hat down over his ears. "Yo're on yore feet, so let's go home before yuh bog down again."

"Don' wanna go home. Noshir. Gimme room! Where's a vic'im?"

"You don't need no victim. We're goin' home and we're goin' right now, *sabe?* You come with me, or yo're goin' to be awful, awful sorry, Yak. Heed me, cowboy, heed me!"

Yakima nodded slowly and let Chuck lead him away. The crowd laughed, drank a "how" to the giver and went back to their games. But Hashknife did not play again, and a little later he and Sleepy mounted their horses and rode back to the Diamond H.

And for the first time since he had found out that Ma Holton had been duped Hashknife was so light-hearted that he sang all the verses of the "Dying Cowboy" and Sleepy assisted at times. They finished the last chorus as they rode up to the stable, and from within came the long drawn *cock-a-doodle-dooo-o-o* of their baritone chicken.

Hashknife laughed softly as he yanked off his saddle. Sleepy grinned to himself, because it was not often that Hashknife let him in on a secret.

THE next few days were spent at the ranch, doing some general repair work. The whole place was in bad repair; so Hashknife and Sleepy became rough-carpenters, post-hole-diggers and hewers of poles. For once in their lives they worked willingly at something that would have been distasteful at any other time.

Uncle Billy followed them from place to place, marveling at their fondness for manual labor, and trying to find out what they had done toward making the Medicine River bank come to time. Ma Holton knew nothing of Uncle Billy's worries. She was content to work around the ranch-house and plan for the future.

Wednesday came and with it came Joe Ables, the cattle-buyer. He was a big rough-looking person, with a hearty laugh and a deep bass voice. He drove in from the north in a buckboard and chuckled joyously at sight of Uncle Billy, who looked at him in dismay.

"Hello, you old pirate!" he whooped, as he shook hands with Uncle Billy. "By gee, I'm glad to see yuh again, Uncle Billy. The stage-driver told me yuh was back at the ranch again. I just drove from Silver Lake, and the men who made that road ought to be prosecuted."

"I got yore letter," said Uncle Billy, trying hard to think what to say.

"Everybody gets 'em," boomed Ables. "I sure blow a long horn."

Uncle Billy introduced Hashknife and Sleepy and Ables shook hands heartily.

"Ain'tcha goin' to stop a while?" asked Uncle Billy.

"Thanks, Uncle Billy, but I've got to keep goin'. Buyin' cows is a dog's life. Look how thin I'm gettin'." Ables laughed heartily. "How's all the little cowlets comin' these days?"

Uncle Billy shook his head sadly.

"It's like this, Joe—"

"I know," said Ables quickly. "Ain't much range gossip that don't come to my ears. I sure was sorry, old-timer. Been a long time since I came through here, but about a year ago I seen one whole train of Diamond H beef, and it made me kinda homesick for the Medicine River range."

"Whole train of Diamond H beef?" queried Hashknife. This was getting interesting.

"About thirty cars, yeah. That was before I knew anythin' about Uncle Billy's troubles, and I thought somebody was steppin' in on my territory, so I hunted up the man who bought 'em. Yuh see, Uncle Billy always sold to me.

"Anyway, I found out that Harry Peters had bought 'em for the Castleman outfit; so I went on a still hunt for Harry. I know him so well that he told me all about the mortgage trouble. It seems that he bought 'em at Silver Lake from a man who had bought 'em from the bank.

"That's one reason I've been to Silver Lake. Harry told me he got 'em cheap, and I'm lookin' for cheap cattle," Ables laughed softly.

"Didja buy some?" asked Hashknife.

"Nope. Maybe Harry lied to me—I dunno. Anyway, I couldn't find the man he bought from, and nobody seemed to know who he was."

"What was his name?"

"Green."

Hashknife and Sleepy looked at each other quickly. Uncle Billy paid no attention to the name, and it meant nothing to Ables, except what he had told them.

"And yuh couldn't find him, eh?" Thus Hashknife.

"Nope. Cost me an extra two days. I've never made Silver Lake before, and I'm not goin' again."

"Railroad in there?"

"Branch. Twenty miles from main line. Lumber mostly. I've got to work fast around here, because I'm due down in the Rainbow country the last of the week. When I get back to Chicago, I'm goin' to crawl all over Harry Peters."

"Yuh might get down and rest yore feet," suggested Uncle Billy, but Ables shook his head.

"When yuh get more cows, don't forget me," said Ables. "I'll kinda keep in touch with yuh. Pleased to meet you two gents."

They shook hands with Ables and watched him drive toward town, humped in his jiggling buckboard.

"The bank sold my cattle, did they?" mused Uncle Billy aloud. "They sold everythin' worth while and then unloaded the place on Ma. By ——, I'm gettin' pretty mad, Hashknife."

"Keep cool," advised Hashknife. He managed to talk Uncle Billy into keeping quiet about the cattle sale, but the old man threw up both hands in desperation.

"Yeah, I'll keep still," he agreed. "I dunno why I promise to do it. Yuh make me tired with yore grinnin', Hashknife. Ma talks about what we're goin' to do, and I set there and nod like a darn fool. She'll find out, I tell yuh."

"Not from any of us, Uncle Billy," assured Hashknife. "We know how to keep a secret—the three of us."

"Yeah, I s'pose."

Hashknife questioned Uncle Billy about the town of Silver Lake, and that afternoon he and Sleepy saddled their horses, told Uncle Billy not to look for them until they came back, and rode north.

IT WAS about thirty miles and they did not blame Ables for kicking about the road. But they pushed their horses hard and were at Silver Lake for supper. Practically the whole town and the surrounding timber country was owned by one corporation and had been a thriving lumber town, but the timber was nearly all gone, along with the future of Silver Lake.

There was only one saloon left in the town and this one was doing little business. Hashknife immediately struck up a conversation with the bald-headed bartender, who was willing to talk.

"You fellers ain't lookin' for jobs here, are yuh?" he asked.

"All depends," smiled Hashknife. "Is there any cows around?"

"Not around here."

"Used to be, didn't there?"

"Not enough to make it a cow-country. Used to be a ranch back in the hills about two miles from here. I dunno who started it. That was before my time around here."

"Who owned it?" asked Hashknife.

"I dunno." The bartender appealed to a young lumber-jack who was playing solitaire. "Olsen, do yuh remember who owned that cow-ranch on the west side of the lake?"

"No," Olsen shook his head. "There was an outfit there about a year ago, but they didn't stay long. Shipped all their cattle. Said something about the cows gettin' poisoned by eatin' larkspur, or some darned thing. They wasn't here long enough to get acquainted."

"Was the man named Green?"

"I dunno. Don't think I ever heard his name."

"How many cows?"

"I dunno how many. I know they shipped from here and closed up the ranch."

And that was about all they could find out about the short-lived cattle ranch and the man named Green. The next morning they had a talk with the postmaster, but without results. He knew that somebody had occupied the old ranch, but no mail had come to them at Silver Lake. In fact, he did not remember seeing any of them.

"Somebody by the name of Green stole the Diamond H cattle, drove 'em to that deserted ranch and made a sale," said Hashknife, as they rode homeward. "It was a

cinch. Uncle Billy was drinkin' and gamblin' and never missed 'em. That cattle-buyer swallowed the story of the bank sellin' the cattle to Green, which he naturally would—and there yuh are, cowboy."

"Took nerve to do it," declared Sleepy. "Them Diamond H cattle were well known."

"Took brains to plan it," said Hashknife. "We're up against somebody with brains, I'll tell yuh that, Sleepy."

"We've got brains, too," grinned Sleepy. "I hope yore scheme works out. It looks to me like you was doin' a —— of a lot of guessin', but mebby yo're right. We could split that six thousand reward."

"We could split a lot more than that, if we wanted to be crooked, young feller."

"And nobody would ever be the wiser, Hashknife."

"Except us, Sleepy."

"Yeah, we're our greatest drawback."

And when they arrived at the ranch that afternoon they found that their secret was no longer a secret. Anderson had been out to see them, and Ma Holton knew that she did not own the Diamond H ranch. A chance remark by Ables who knew Anderson had caused Anderson to question Laskey, and the truth of the whole matter came out.

Anderson was furious over it. He lost no time in riding out to the ranch to fire Hashknife and Sleepy, but did not find them there. He and Uncle Billy almost came to blows when the old man accused the bank of double-dealing, and Anderson rode away swearing all kinds of things.

Ma Holton seemed dazed over the shock. She realized that all her money was gone, and with it had fled all her hopes.

"I bought it honestly," she repeated several times. "I paid all my money, I haven't anything left. Mr. Anderson says we'll have to move out right away, because he is going to close up the place. Why, we haven't any place to go. Isn't it funny to not have any place to go?"

"Yeah, it shore is funny," said Hashknife grimly. "It almost makes me laugh, Ma."

"And you knew it all the time, Hashknife?"

"Yeah, we knew it, Ma. Miller showed us that you had been robbed. We tried to keep it a secret until we was able to try and find the guilty parties, 'cause we didn't want to hurt yuh."

"Well, that was nice of you, anyway. Oh, boys, I don't want you to think that I blame you in any way. You have done a lot for me and Uncle Billy, and we thank you. But it's all over now. We'll get along somehow, we always have."

"Anderson said he'd bring the sheriff and put us out," said Uncle Billy bitterly. "Dang his hide, I almost busted him in the nose."

"But he was right," said ma. "We don't own it, Uncle Billy."

"No, we don't own it, but we've got feelin's left."

"And he came out to fire us, eh?" grinned Hashknife.

"You betcha."

Hashknife laughed and patted Ma on the shoulder.

"We're goin' down and have a talk with him, Ma."

"Well, lemme tell yuh, he's mad," declared Uncle Billy.

"I—I hope the sheriff don't come up here," said Ma. "We'll get out as soon as we can. The Lord only knows where we'll go."

"You have supper ready when we get back," said Hashknife. "Yuh might not have to move out."

"What do you mean, Hashknife?"

Hashknife grinned at her. "I'm goin' to talk a little, Ma. And when I talk real serious-like, I mostly always get results."

They walked out, leaving the old couple staring after them, and went to the bunkhouse. A few minutes later they rode toward Medicine River. Hashknife squinted seriously ahead, his jaw jutting belligerently.

"Yuh goin' to take a chance, Hashknife?" asked Sleepy.

"Yeah, I sure am. I'm willin' to gamble that I'm right."

"I'll trail with yuh, tall-feller."

IT WAS after banking hours when they arrived at Medicine River, but Anderson and Laskey were still in the bank and let them in.

"You was out at the Diamond H today," began Hashknife.

"I was!" snapped Anderson. "I found out what has been going on and I went out there to——"

"Now, this won't get us anywhere," interrupted Hashknife. "You told me you

would sell the Diamond H as soon as possible, didn't yuh? All right—how much?"

"Huh-how much? You want——"

"Yore best price, Anderson. I know what it's worth."

"Well, there's a ten thousand dollar mortgage——"

"There was, yuh mean. I came here to talk prices. Set yore own price and don't go hog-wild on values. The ranch ain't worth a —— to the bank; so don't start any arguments with me."

"You are rather high-handed, young man."

"Y'betcha. I always am when I've got money in my pocket. How much?"

"Wait a minute." Anderson walked to the rear of the bank and conversed with Laskey, while Hashknife and Sleepy waited impatiently. Finally Anderson came back to them.

"Do you know how many head of Diamond H cattle there are in this range?" he asked.

"Not over thirty head—mostly culls."

"That's what my report shows. If you really want to buy the ranch, it is for sale—twenty-five hundred."

"You've sold it," declared Hashknife. "Can yuh make out a deed right away?"

Anderson called to Laskey, "Frank, see if Polk is in his office. If he is, have him come here right away."

It did not take Laskey long to bring the lawyer, who made out the necessary papers, and Hashknife handed Anderson two one thousand dollar bills and five hundred in smaller currency. The deed had been made out to Mrs. William Holton.

"Pretty big bills for this country," said Anderson. "Don't see many of that denomination around here."

"They're hard to get cashed," grinned Hashknife. "We usually carry a lot of 'em around with us."

Polk examined them closely, as did Laskey.

"Didja get over yore nightmare all right, Polk?" asked Sleepy.

"Yeah, suh. Funny, wasn't it. I'd have sworn it wasn't a dream."

"I know how yuh felt," laughed Sleepy. "I'm always dreamin' about bein' out in company with nothin' on but my underclothes. You sure looked foolish. I'll betcha Chuck Allard swore off drinkin' that night. He took one look at yuh and walked out."

But Andrew Jackson Polk failed to see anything funny in the recollections of Sleepy Stevens. Hashknife offered to buy a drink, but the invitation fell flat; so he and Sleepy mounted their horses and rode back to the ranch.

Ma Holton had supper ready for them. She was trying to be cheerful and met them with a smile, but they knew that she was wearing the smile for their sake. Hashknife and Sleepy ate supper alone.

"We wasn't hungry," said Uncle Billy simply.

Hashknife grinned and handed the papers to Ma Holton.

"Here's an appetizer, Ma," he said. "Read 'em and grin."

The two old folks unfolded them under the light and held their breath as they read the printed lines, while Sleepy choked over his food and tried to whistle a tune.

"For the consideration of one dollar?" Uncle Billy looked at Hashknife in amazement. "You—you paid——"

Ma Holton dropped the papers in her lap and her hands trembled as she removed her glasses. She was unable to speak, but both boys were adept in sign language, and nodded violently.

"But for—for one dollar!" blurted Uncle Billy. That was the only part of it that he did not seem to understand.

It was a situation that neither of the boys were prepared to meet, so they fled for the door and smoked their after-supper cigarets, as they sat perched on the top-pole of the corral fence, while the big, yellow moon peeped over the Medicine River hills.

"Yo're awful crooked, don'tcha know it?" said Sleepy softly.

"Yeah—and I'm awful happy, too," chuckled Hashknife.

III

THE next day Ma Holton tried to get Hashknife to take back the deed, but he only laughed at her.

"But it belongs to you," she persisted. "You paid your own money for it, Hashknife."

"What's a dollar?"

"Oh, I know all about that. It only takes a dollar to make it legal, but you never bought the Diamond H for a dollar. Why do you do all these things for us?"

"I'm kinda funny," admitted Hashknife

seriously. "Nobody ever understood me very well. But don'tcha worry about that, Ma. Mebby some day I'll tell yuh all about buyin' this ranch."

"We're gettin' a lot of fun out of it," added Sleepy.

"Well," said Ma dubiously, "I hope you are, boys. I know I can't stand many more shocks."

Uncle Billy accepted without a question, because he thought there was something behind the whole deal. Not that he wasn't properly grateful.

"Been saved from the poor-farm twice in a week," he declared. "If I was a bit superstitious I'd prob'ly figure that it ain't the place for me."

A Diamond H yearling came down to the stream behind the stable, and it did not take Hashknife and Sleepy long to convert it to some perfectly good veal, which they hung in a cooling shed.

"Have Ma make out a grocery list and we'll stock up the old place," said Hashknife. "We won't go to any poor-farm as long as our credit is good and the yearlin's wander down."

They patched up an old buckboard, harnessed Sleepy's saddle horse with an old Diamond H sorrel which had been in harness for a year and started for Medicine River. The brake-blocks were so badly worn that the brake was useless, and the lines would not stand a heavy pull, so they staged a runaway from the Diamond H to the War Paint hitch-rack. At times they were completely off the road, but they clung to the seat and whooped like a pair of wild Indians.

At the War Paint rack Sleepy's horse proceeded to kick the dash-board off the antiquated vehicle, much to the amusement of Medicine River town. Sleepy flexed his weary arms and swore he was the best driver in the world.

Cherokee Lee was in town and lost no time in having a talk with Hashknife. Cherokee had talked with Anderson, who had told of the transaction.

"I don't *sabe* why yuh done it, but it sure was a fine thing for to do," said the sheriff. "Anderson said he wondered how it was that a cowpuncher had twenty-five hundred dollars so handy, and I told him he could prob'ly satisfy his curiosity by askin' yuh where yuh got it," Cherokee chuckled deeply.

"He'd probably be surprized to know how much money I've got," said Hashknife seriously.

"Prob'ly." Dryly. "Anyway, it ain't nobody's business, and I'll bet that's what he got told, if he asked yuh."

The stage came in from the north and Hashknife noticed that Charley Deal, the gambler, was a passenger. He shook hands with the sheriff and went to the War Paint. Hashknife and Sleepy loaded the buckboard with groceries, but decided to stay in town a while.

They met Yakima Reed and Chuck Allard in the Medicine River saloon. Yakima still had his right hand bandaged, but did not seem to bear any malice toward Sleepy.

"How's the Diamond H?" asked Yakima.

"Inchin' along," grinned Hashknife.

"How's the mechanic?" asked Sleepy. He wanted to find out how Yakima felt. But Yakima only grinned and glanced at his bandaged hand.

Sleepy challenged Hashknife to a game of pool, and the other two cowboys soon left the saloon.

"Yakima is a forgivin' sort of a cuss," observed Sleepy.

"Yeah?" Hashknife squinted at the layout of balls and chalked his cue thoughtfully. "Look out for him, cowboy. He's cold sober, and he ain't forgot. A feller like him is just wise enough to play 'possum. Keep yore eye on Allard, too."

"Oh, he ain't pullin' no wool over my eyes."

They finished their game and went to the War Paint. Charley Deal was running the poker game and Yakima Reed occupied one of the chairs. Bill Stivers was also in the game, and nodded to Hashknife.

"Here's a good poker player," laughed Yakima, looking at Hashknife.

Deal looked coldly at Hashknife, but did not seem interested in Yakima's remark. There was a vacant seat at the table, but Hashknife made no move to occupy it.

"If I had his luck I'd never do anythin' but play poker," said Yakima, grinning widely to cover the sneer.

Hashknife grinned and nodded.

"Yeah, and if I didn't have any more nerve than you've got, I'd never play it, Reed."

Yakima flinched and his eyes narrowed angrily, while the other players lost interest

in the game momentarily. But Yakima controlled his temper.

"Thasso?" he said softly, tensely. "I'll play my nerve against yore luck, Hartley."

"All right." Hashknife slid into the chair opposite Yakima and bought chips. Stivers shifted uneasily in his chair. This had all the earmarks of trouble. Allard had moved in behind Yakima's chair and Sleepy took a similar position behind Hashknife.

After a few hands had been played Stivers cashed in his chips and drew out of the game. This left only Deal, Hashknife, Yakima and another cowboy, Cliff Montell, who worked for O'Leary.

"I play poker for pastime," declared Stivers. "That —— game ain't pastime."

Deal watched the play closely, raking out the percentage for the house on each pot, playing conservatively. Montell, in the parlance of poker, played his cards "close to his belt-buckle." In other words, he kept out of the pot until he had a good hand.

But not so with Yakima and Hashknife. They contested nearly every pot, with Yakima slowly losing.

"Nerve against luck," smiled Hashknife, as he drove Yakima out of a pot with a twenty dollar bet. "I had a set of fours that time—four diamonds."

Sleepy watched the dealing. He knew that Hashknife would deal honestly, but kept his eyes on Yakima and Charley Deal, whose long slender fingers hinted of an ability to do queer things with cards.

But as far as Sleepy could see, the professional gambler was playing a square game. At least he was not winning. But it was his deal which brought the game to an abrupt close.

HASHKNIFE picked up three kings and opened the pot. Yakima studied his hand closely, exposing it to Chuck Allard, indicating certain cards, as though asking Chuck's advice. Chuck nodded and Yakima discarded one card, flipping it carelessly to the table.

"Gimme one card," he said.

"One to me," said Hashknife.

The dealer took three cards, but dropped out when Hashknife made a small bet, and got up from the table to get a drink at the bar. Yakima made a substantial raise. He seemed tensed, like a runner waiting for the starter's gun.

Hashknife squinted at him closely, a half-grin on his lips, as he called the bet. It was the first time that Hashknife had merely called on the first raise.

"Show 'em to me," said Hashknife. Yakima relaxed slightly and spread two small pair.

"Three kings." Hashknife exposed a king of clubs, king of hearts and a king of diamonds, but did not show the other two cards in his hand. He mixed them up in the discards, raked in the pot and told the dealer to cash in the chips.

"Quittin', are yuh?" sneered Yakima.

Hashknife had got to his feet.

"Yeah, I reckon I will, Reed. I don't care to play for pastime."

He took his winnings and walked out, followed by Sleepy, who did not understand why Hashknife had quit. They untied the team and went out of town in a cloud of dust. But this time they were able to control the team. It was upgrade most of the way, and the load was fairly heavy.

"What did yuh quit for?" asked Sleepy. "You was cleanin' up that game."

"Didn't you see it, Sleepy?" Hashknife's dusty face broke into a wide grin.

"I didn't see anythin', Hashknife. What do yuh mean?"

"It was kinda well framed up, Sleepy. The gambler knew what was goin' to happen, so he moved out. Yakima showed Allard his hand and they agreed on a one-card discard, if yuh remember.

"We both drawed one. Yakima didn't help his hand. I helped mine."

"Yuh did? Yuh showed—"

"I showed my original three kings. Yakima figured on callin' me, don'tcha see, Sleepy? He wanted me to spread my hand."

"No, I don't see," wailed Sleepy. "You talk foolish. You had him beat, so what in —— difference did it make who called?"

"Just this difference, Sleepy." Hashknife grinned. "Yakima Reed discarded one card—the king of spades. After the draw I had that king."

"You had that king of spades?"

"Uh-huh. Yakima had Chuck to prove that it was the same card."

"But it was dealt to yuh, Hashknife."

"Sure thing. And if I'd 'a' spread it with the other three, Yakima Reed would 'a' shot me, prob'ly."

"Well, it sure escaped my eye," admitted

Sleepy. "That darned tin-horn gambler framed it, eh?"

"Between 'em. It sure worked out fine, except that I looked for trouble and they set the stage too nicely. It was just a case of beatin' 'em at their own game. As you mentioned a while ago, Yakima Reed is sure a forgivin' sort of a cuss."

"But what made yuh suspect that it was a frame-up?"

"Well, for one thing, the dealer left the game. He could 'a' called for a drink. Another thing, it was the first time that Yakima had showed Allard his cards, and in the third place I seen the dealer palm Yakima's discard. It was smooth work, but not smooth enough. I didn't want to lose the pot, nor I didn't want to kill anybody, so I called Yakima, made him show his hand and only exposed enough of my hand to win the pot."

"Well, yo're lucky, I'll say that much, Hashknife."

"Yeah, I'm lucky. But I'm gettin' so darned smart that I can make my own luck, cowboy. And that's about all there is to luck."

"Mebbe that's right," agreed Sleepy. "Next time I see Yakima Reed, I'm goin' to bust him one for luck."

"Yuh may have to," grinned Hashknife.

They unloaded their groceries at the ranch house and unhitched their mismated team. The sheriff had been at the ranch during their absence and had questioned Uncle Billy and ma about the purchase of the ranch. It was evident that Cherokee Lee shared Anderson's curiosity as to where Hashknife had secured the twenty-five hundred dollars.

He was probably more curious after a talk with the old folks.

"I told him I didn't know a darned thing," grinned Uncle Billy. "Ma showed him the papers. He knew about somebody sellin' ma the ranch. I reckon Miller or Anderson told him."

"Let 'em wonder," said Hashknife. "If he wants to know where we got the money, we can refer him to certain jobs, that paid us more than that amount."

"I told him that it wasn't anybody's business," said ma. "And I told him I knew that the money was honestly earned."

Ma Holton had a big supper for them and during the meal she insisted on Hashknife's taking back the deed again. But he laughed at her and refused.

"Well, let me give you a mortgage on the ranch Hashknife. Tell me how much you paid and I'll have it drawn up."

"Not me," protested Hashknife. "I hate mortgages. Anyway, you don't owe me a cent. And more than that, Ma Holton, if you start this argument again, me and Sleepy are goin' to saddle our broncs and ride away."

"Hide the dern thing!" exploded Uncle Billy.

Ma grinned and put the papers away, while Hashknife sprawled on the couch and blew smoke rings at the ceiling.

Ma Holton came back to Hashknife and he grinned at her.

"I just want to say," she said slowly, "that the Diamond H will always be a home to you boys. No matter where you are, this is your home, and we'll always be mighty glad to have you home with me and Uncle Billy.

"Yo're danged right!" exclaimed Uncle Billy. "And if yuh ain't got money enough to come home on, write, and we'll send it, if we have to sell the last cow we own."

Hashknife got to his feet and held out his hand to ma.

"That's the best pay I ever got for any job," he said. "Me and Sleepy have always been a pair of range tramps, Ma. Many and many a time have folks asked us where our home was. Sometimes it kinda hurts to stop and think it over, when folks ask that question.

"Everybody ought to have a home, somewhere in the world, where somebody would welcome yuh back. We've never had any—me and that bow-legged saddle-slicker. But we've got one now. Sleepy! Do yuh hear?"

"Aw-w-w, I heard," Sleepy blinked thoughtfully. "It makes yuh feel kinda funny to have a home. Christmas, New Years and Thanksgivin' we can come home, cowboy."

"And eat," said Hashknife. "That's all you think about."

It was about nine o'clock when Hashknife and Sleepy left the ranch-house. The sky was cloudy and the night so dark that they had to feel their way across the yard to the bunk-house.

"Like a stack of black cats," declared Sleepy, as they pawed at the bunk-house door-knob.

Hashknife was half-way across the room,

trying to locate the table-lamp, when something crashed down on his head, dazing him so badly that he went to his knees. He struggled to his feet, his hands coming in contact with some one, but another blow dropped him cold.

WHEN Andrew Jackson Polk crossed the street to the War Paint saloon the next morning, he found Bill Stivers, the deputy sheriff, having a drink with Charley Deal. Polk excused himself for intruding and accepted their invitation to have a drink. The poker game of the day before seemed to have been the topic of conversation, which was resumed after Polk's drink had been poured.

"Yakima was sore," declared Stivers. "Allard was sore, too. Somethin' happened in that last pot to make Hartley quit."

"Maybe not," said Deal. "He was ahead of the game."

"No, it wasn't that, Charley. Parker Miller told Cherokee somethin' about this Hartley, and it don't sound like Hartley is the kind of a whippoor-will who will quit just because he's ahead."

"What did Miller tell Cherokee?" asked Deal.

"Enough to cause Cherokee to trail with Hartley in anythin' Hartley wants to do. Oh, Cherokee checked up on everythin', and he found that Miller didn't lie."

"It seems," said Andrew Jackson Polk, "that we are entertaining quite a prominent man."

"He's prominent in some ways," laughed Stivers.

"What about his partner?" asked Deal.

"Gun-man," said Stivers.

"Yeah? What are they doing here?"

"Well," grinned Stivers, "I never got well enough acquainted with 'em to ask that question. They came here to run the Diamond H ranch for the Medicine River Bank, and it may be that old man Holton has hired 'em to work for him."

"They wouldn't hardly be stayin' around at forty a month."

"Maybe they're tryin' to find out who killed Miller."

"Yeah," nodded Deal. "They might be, at that."

Yakima Reed, Chuck Allard and another cowboy came in. Deal set up the drinks.

"We were talkin' about that poker game yesterday afternoon," said Stivers to Yakima. "What do yuh reckon caused Hartley to quit when he did?"

Yakima grimaced sourly.

"Mebbe he was scared."

"Mebbe," said Stivers doubtfully. "He didn't look scared."

"Well, don't ask me—ask him, Bill."

"Uh-huh. Well, yuh don't need to get snappy about it, Yak. He sure gave yuh all the action yuh wanted."

"Did he? Called one raise with three kings. I don't call that action."

"I'd say he was pretty good to yuh—and you with two pair."

"Oh, what the —— do you care?"

"Not a thing. Let's have a drink."

But before the bartender could put out the glasses Uncle Billy came in, hatless, coatless, breathless.

"Where's Cherokee?" he panted.

"Cherokee? What do yuh want of him?" asked Stivers.

"—— fool question! Where is he, Bill?"

"I left him at the restaurant, Uncle Billy."

The old man turned around, stepped out of the saloon and went running up the sidewalk, while the men came from the saloon and watched him enter the restaurant. Hashknife's sorrel horse stood at the hitch-rack, it's sides heaving from a fast run.

Stivers was halfway to the restaurant when Uncle Billy and Cherokee Lee came out, and he joined them.

"What's wrong?" asked Stivers.

"Come on and we'll get our horses," said Cherokee. "Be with yuh in a minute, Uncle Billy."

They ran down the street to their stable, where they saddled hurriedly and joined the old man. Yakima, Allard, Deal and Polk had come to the hitch-rack and questioned Uncle Billy as he mounted his horse, but he refused to answer.

Cherokee and Stivers came galloping up the street and Uncle Billy spurred in beside them, while the four men stood at the hitch-rack and wondered what it was all about.

"Somethin' is wrong at the Diamond H," was all that Cherokee had told Bill Stivers.

They dismounted at the ranch-house and went down to the bunk-house, which showed signs of conflict. The table had been smashed flat, the lamp had been upset and broken. There was a splotch

of blood on the inner side of the door, a pool of blood near the broken table, and the bedding had been dragged from both bunks.

"I—I found one blanket out in the yard," faltered Uncle Billy. "It had blood on it, too. Their six-shooters are here. One was on the floor near the stove and the other was under the bunk. Prob'ly lost 'em in the fight."

"What do yuh make of it, Cherokee?" asked Stivers.

The sheriff shook his head, "I dunno, Bill. It looks like somebody had jumped Hartley and Stevens in the dark. Probably laid for 'em."

"They left the house about nine o'clock," said Uncle Billy. "We never heard any noise, never knew anythin' was wrong until I came to call 'em to breakfast. They didn't answer the gong, yuh know."

Ma Holton came down from the house and stood beside the door.

"Any news of them?" she asked.

"Not yet, Mrs. Holton," said the sheriff. He came outside and looked all around, but there was nothing to indicate that there had been any struggle in the yard.

"Somebody sure tore up that bunk-house," said Stivers.

"I don't mind that part of it," said Ma Holton. "But I do want my boys back again. You don't suppose somebody killed them, do you?"

"No-o-o," drawled Cherokee. "Somebody took 'em away, it looks like to me. If they killed 'em, they'd leave 'em here."

"But why would they take them away, Sheriff?" asked Uncle Billy.

"I dunno. There's a lot of things I don't know about this deal."

Cherokee and Stivers mounted their horses and circled the ranch, hoping to pick up some evidence which would assist them in making a search. But they found nothing. The ground was so dry and hard that a horsetrack would hardly show.

"If you killed a man at the ranch and wanted to hide the body, where would yuh take it, Bill?" asked Cherokee.

Bill laughed and shook his head.

"I dunno Cherokee. I'd prob'ly be so danged scared that I'd leave it where it fell."

"You ain't much help to me, Willyum."

"I thought yuh wanted a deputy, not a murderer."

"Well, I s'pose yuh are better thataway," admitted Cherokee. "About all we can do is to ride and look, so we might as well act like officers of the law."

And while Cherokee and Bill Stivers headed back in to the hills, Hashknife Hartley twisted and turned, fighting for an extra fraction of an inch slack in his ropes. He had been conscious for several hours, but unable to make much progress toward loosening his bonds.

"Yo're all right, ain't yuh, Sleepy?" He had asked that question a dozen times in an hour, and a dozen times he had received the same answer—

"Like —— I am."

Neither of them had any idea of where they were, nor how they got there. Their experiences in the bunk-house were about the same—a smash on the head. They were both well aware that they had been hit and that their assailants had not spared any pains in hog-tying them; but all this had failed to dampen their sense of humor.

"Ma will be worried," said Sleepy painfully.

"I'm kinda worried myself," said Hashknife, and a moment later gave a yelp of joy.

"I' ain't got no hair left on the back of my head and all the skin is off my nose, but by golly, I've got the bandage off my eyes."

He hitched himself against the wall and blinked tearfully. It was semi-darkness in the only room of what seemed to be a small log cabin, without a stick of furniture, no windows and one door. The floor was of clay.

SLEEPY was lying near him, tightly bound and with a cloth tightly tied over his eyes.

"What do you see, pardner?" asked Hashknife.

"See, ——! Don't try to be funny."

Hashknife was close enough to see that Sleepy's bandage was blood-soaked, as was one side of his head and face. His own face was stiff from blood and dirt and his head pounded painfully every time he made a move.

He explained the details of their prison to Sleepy, who thanked him very kindly and wanted to know what time it was.

"Forgot to wind my watch," said Hashknife. "Why don'tcha try to get loose?"

"Why? No use. I've got all the skin rubbed off my wrists now."

Hashknife managed to roll over to Sleepy and to set his teeth in Sleepy's blindfold. Hunching one shoulder against the

ground, he managed to worry the bandage over the bridge of Sleepy's nose.

"Hey!" yelped Sleepy. "Leggo my nose! Whatcha trying to do, peel me? Ouch! —— yuh, Hashknife!"

But Hashknife kept jerking until the cloth was off Sleepy's eyes, and that worthy swore roundly.

"Why didn't yuh pull it the other way?" he wailed. "I'm a lot narrower thataway. One of my eyebrows is rolled up in that darned rag, I'll betcha."

"You can see, can'tcha, Sleepy?"

"Yeah, I can see—what there is to be seen."

They looked at each other and grinned foolishly.

"Yo're a —— of a lookin' thing," declared Sleepy.

"So are you, pardner."

"Ho, hum-m-m!" Hashknife squinted up at the ceiling. "It's day-light, Sleepy. You can see some light seepin' in. By golly, I wonder why they made this shack so air-tight. No window at all. Even the chinkin' is a solid job."

"Architecture don't interest me right now," Sleepy groaned and shut his eyes. "I've had a lot of headaches, but this is the prime ache of 'em all. How are we ever goin' to get loose?"

"We ain't," declared Hashknife. "Yuh can always read about how the hero found a busted bottle or somethin' like that, and sawed his bonds, but they took the bottle away from here. I reckon we'll stay here until somebody comes along."

"And mebby they won't turn us loose, Hashknife."

"Mebby not. I wish I knew where we are and who put us here."

And, as if in answer to Hashknife's wish, there came the *cut, cut, cut, cut, ca-dar-cut!* of a hen.

They looked at each other quickly, wonderingly.

"Lady Godiva!" exploded Sleepy.

"Sounded more like Mary Garden, Sleepy. But it can't be either of 'em. Say! Sleepy, look at this shack! Think how it would look from the outside!"

"It would look fine to me, pardner."

"I don't mean that—I mean the shape of it. By ——, this is the little log cabin that Uncle Billy said he built and intended to make into a smoke-house.

"Ha-a-a-ay! Uncle Billy! Whooee-e-e-e!" Hashknife yelled at the top of his voice. Sleepy joined him and together they fairly shook the roof.

And Uncle Billy heard them. The little shack was so tightly built that their voices were muffled, and it took Uncle Billy and ma quite a while to locate them. The door had been padlocked, but Uncle Billy did not wait to hunt for a key. He took an ax-handle and pried out the staple.

Ma Holton cried over them, while Uncle Billy cut the ropes and helped them to their feet, and then they limped to the house to receive first aid. Both of them bore scalp wounds, painful swellings, and were stiff and sore from their bonds, but they laughed and told all they knew of the assault.

"More dinged funny things happenin' around here," declared Uncle Billy. "I don't *sabe* none of it. Say, we found yore guns in the bunk-house, and everythin' was all torn up around there. Looks like there'd been a bullfight."

Hashknife and Sleepy limped down to the bunk-house and viewed the place.

"It sure looks cyclonic," laughed Hashknife.

"I dunno," Uncle Billy scratched his head foolishly, "You boys ain't carryin' on none to speak about. What in —— was it all about, anyway?"

"That's part of the joke, Uncle Billy," grinned Hashknife.

"Well, it may be a joke, but I don't know when to laugh."

"We'll tell yuh when."

As they started back toward the house Cherokee Lee and Bill Stivers rode in and dismounted.

"Well, for gosh sake!" exploded Cherokee. "We've been curryin' the hills for you two fellers."

"And they were locked up in my little log shack over there," explained Uncle Billy.

Hashknife told Cherokee what had happened to them, and the sheriff scratched his cheek reflectively.

"Yeah, that's all right, Hartley. But who hit yuh?"

"It was too dark to see, Sheriff. They knocked us so cold that we slept real sound."

"Uh-huh. But what did they hit yuh for?"

"They didn't say."

"Aw-w-w!" Cherokee scratched the other cheek. "Didn't, eh?"

"Hartley, did this have anythin' to do

with the poker game yesterday?" Thus Bill Stivers.

"Poker game?"

"Between you and Yakima Reed."

"Where would yuh find any connection, Stivers?"

"Gosh, I dunno."

"They tied yuh up and left yuh in that log shack," said the sheriff. "Why did they do that? It don't sound reasonable."

"Mebbe you don't see things like they do," grinned Hashknife.

"Prob'ly not." Dryly. "I wish I saw things like *you* do."

"Then you might get hit on the head," laughed Hashknife. "Too much knowledge is a bad thing sometimes, Sheriff. I wish that you and Stives would go back and tell everybody that yuh can't find us. Tell 'em about how the bunk-house looks, and that yuh found pieces of rope and blood spots in the little log shack. Yuh might say that the door looks like it had been busted open from the inside, and all that."

"Yeah, we might do that," nodded the sheriff. "I dunno why we should lie about it though."

"You don't need to lie. You couldn't find us, could yuh? And you can see the pieces of rope and the blood spots out in the log shack, if yuh care to look."

Cherokee grinned softly, "All right, Hartley. But you better get found pretty soon. There's a dance in Medicine River day after tomorrow night, and yuh don't want to miss it. All the pretty giirls will be there."

"Somebody will find us by that time," grinned Hashknife. "Me and Sleepy sure do put up some exhibition of dancin', and we hate to miss a chance to entertain the natives."

Cherokee and Bill mounted their horses.

"Any special person yuh want me to tell this story to?" asked Cherokee.

"No-o-o, just make it kinda general."

"All right, Hartley. Get over yore bruises and I'll introduce yuh to some mighty pretty girls. So-long."

They rode away and the two cowboys went back to the shady porch with Uncle Billy, where they joined Ma Holton.

"How would yuh like to go to a dance, Ma?" asked Hashknife.

"Dance? Me? Bless your heart, I ain't danced for so long that I couldn't do it. Anyway, I haven't anything nice to wear Hashknife."

"You've got plenty of good clothes, Ma," said Uncle Billy.

"Let me furnish yuh with clothes, Ma," suggested Hashknife.

"For goodness sake, what do you mean, Hashknife?"

"I can't tell yuh yet, ma. It'll be askin' quite a lot, but I hope yuh can do it. I've been wonderin' a lot about how to work this deal, and this dance gives me a good idea."

"All right," ma laughed and patted Hashknife's arm. "Your old ma will do most anything for her boys. Go and wash your faces and get ready to eat."

"We'll talk this over later," said Hashknife seriously. "It might be too dangerous, and by golly, we ain't goin' to take any chances on gettin' yuh hurt."

"A few more shocks won't hurt me," laughed ma. "I'm getting used to them."

"I hope this will be the last one," said Hashknife. "I'm gettin' tired of 'em myself."

CHEROKEE LEE was as good as his word. He and Stivers stabled their horses and went to the War Paint. It seemed as though everybody in Medicine River knew that something had gone wrong at the Diamond H, and was waiting for someone to bring the news.

Even Anderson, the banker, and Andrew Jackson Polk came to hear what Cherokee Lee had to say.

"Dunno a darn thing about it," declared Cherokee. "They left the ranch-house last night about nine o'clock. This mornin' they was gone. The bunk-house was all torn up inside and blood over everythin'. Their two six-shooters were on the floor and the place sure looks like a battle-ground. Me and Bill searched all around, and in a little log shack near the stable we found pieces of rope and more blood spots. The door had been padlocked, it seemed, but the staple on the hasp had been shoved out. It kinda looked to me as though somebody had been locked in there and had managed to knock the staple loose."

"And you couldn't find them?" asked Anderson.

Cherokee shook his head. "Nope. Me and Bill circled the hills, but couldn't find 'em, Anderson. It sure looks funny."

"Are their horses still there?" Thus Chuck Allard.

"Yeah, I reckon they are. Uncle Billy rode one of 'em down here after me this mornin'."

"That's right," nodded Yakima. "I noticed that."

"Perhaps they have left the country." Andrew Jackson Polk's suggestion did not meet with favor.

"On foot?" queried Stivers. "Any old time a cowpuncher walks!"

"Well, what's the answer?" Jim O'Leary did not care to listen to speculations.

"I wish I knew," said Cherokee. "They've prob'ly been murdered and thrown in the brush. I reckon my best bet is to set on a hill and watch for buzzards."

Cherokee evidently thought that he might as well romance a little on his own account when he found he could do it seriously.

"If they were dead, how could they bust out of the shack?" said O'Leary.

"Nobody said they busted out of the shack," said Cherokee. "I said it looked thataway to me. Somebody busted out. Somebody had also been tied up in there, somebody that bled quite a lot. Kinda looks like somebody had been taken in there, all tied up."

"Tied up and murdered, eh? And then taken out and hid?"

"Well, mebby that was it. Jim, for gosh sake, don't start any argument with me. I dunno any more about it than you do."

And this settled the argument as far as the sheriff was concerned, although the others continued the discussion after the sheriff and his deputy had left the saloon.

"It sounds rather queer to me," declared Anderson. "Hartley paid me twenty-five hundred dollars for the Diamond H ranch and had the deed made out to Mrs. Holton. He paid me with two one thousand-dollar bills and the five hundred in smaller ones."

"Thousand-dollar bills?" O'Leary laughed. "Never seen one in my life, I don't believe. Anyway, I don't reckon they're common pocket-pieces among cowpunchers."

"Well, he had two of them."

Several of the cowboys suggested that a search be made, but no one seemed to step forth as a leader, so the idea was abandoned. Cherokee Lee and Bill Stivers remained in their office for the afternoon, finishing up some clerical work and wondering what was behind all this trouble at the Diamond H.

"I've got a hunch that somethin' is goin' to bust pretty soon," said Cherokee. "That long-geared cowpuncher has some ideas, I'll betcha, Bill. He grins at yuh with his mouth, but his eyes don't twinkle. He looks plumb through yuh."

"He plays poker jist like that," declared Stivers. "His eyes and mouth don't work together. And didja ever notice that his hand is always swingin' real close to his gun. Somebody said that Stevens was a gun-man, and he may be, but Hartley is the jigger to look out for."

"Well, we don't need to look out for him, Bill. I'll bet he knows who knocked 'em out. Miller told me to let him alone. I wish we knew who killed Park Miller. Hartley was the first man to look at Miller after he was shot, and I'm wonderin' if Hartley ain't got some idea who done it. But he won't answer questions, that's a cinch."

"If he knows, why don't he do somethin'?" asked Stivers.

Cherokee shook his head and resumed his work. He was a perfectly good sheriff, but there was not a shred of detective ability in his make-up.

That the case had caused a certain amount of interest was manifested the next day when several of the ranchers dropped in at the Diamond H. But Hashknife and Sleepy had kept a close watch and went into hiding.

Cherokee and Stivers dropped in, accepted the absence of the two cowpunchers as a precautionary measure, exchanged a few words with the old folks and rode away. Jim O'Leary and Cliff Montell rode in later on and were welcomed warmly by the old folks. And while they talked came Frank Laskey and Andrew Jackson Polk, driving Anderson's buggy mare hitched to a top-buggy.

Laskey's explanation to the effect that Mr. Anderson was curious to know how things were and did not have time to come himself brought a grin to Uncle Billy's face. Anderson had not forgotten Uncle Billy's wrathful denunciation.

"Well, that's shore nice of Mr. Anderson," said Uncle Billy. "You tell him that everythin' is fine as frog-hair, Frank."

"All right. But is there any news of the missing men?"

"Nope."

"What is your personal opinion, Uncle Billy?"

"Well," the old man knocked the dottle out of his pipe against the porch railing, "pers'nally, I think it'll rain."

O'Leary's laugh irritated Laskey.

"It isn't a joke, is it?" he demanded.

"If it is, we ain't seen it yet." Thus Uncle Billy, soberly. "But we might as well laugh as cry. Still, I've got a hunch that them two boys will take a mighty lot of killin'."

"Exactly," said Andrew Jackson Polk. "Just now it is a case of *corpus delicti*. But if they are not dead, why do they not come back?"

"Yo're gettin' into the question class, too, are yuh?" Jim O'Leary laughed. "Let me tell yuh somethin: If Hartley and Stevens ain't dead, —— pity the men who failed to do the job when they had a chance. Of course, if they had the chance."

"And," said Polk judicially, "if they knew who the men were."

"Oh, sure, that figures in on it," agreed O'Leary.

"If we only knew what it was all done for," said Ma Holton. "Those two boys had no quarrel with any one around Medicine River."

"Hartley had a quarrel with Yakima Reed," said Montell. "And I heard that Yakima took a swipe at Stevens the other night and busted his hand on the War Paint music-box."

"Which was not sufficient cause for a murder," said Polk.

"Well"—Jim O'Leary shook hands with, the old couple—"I've got to be goin' on, folks. If I was you, I wouldn't worry. Yo're comin' to the dance tomorrow night, ain't yuh? By golly, it'll seem like old times to see yuh down there again. Everybody will be there, and Medicine River ain't forgot the Holton family, yuh betcha."

"A whole lot depends," said Uncle Billy. "Me and ma think a lot about them two boys, and we'd kinda hate to go dancin' when they're—well, you know how it is, Jimmy."

"Sure, I know. Anyway, we'll hope for the best. So-long."

Laskey and Polk said good-by and drove away at the same time. Uncle Billy laughed gleefully, as he filled his old pipe.

"Anderson sent his hired man, Ma. Ha, ha, ha, ha! I sure told him where to head in at, and he was scared to come again."

"Anyway, it was nice of him to inquire," said Ma.

"Yeah, nice! Just like most folks think it's nice of them to attend a funeral. They don't go out of respect. Curiosity, I tell yuh. Anderson wanted his curiosity satisfied."

UNCLE BILLY repeated the conversations to Hashknife and Sleepy, who had hibernated in the cellar, along with some old magazines, blankets and an oil lamp. The cellar entrance was a trap-door in the middle of the kitchen.

"Anderson got curious and sent Frank Laskey out to see what it was all about," Uncle Billy told them. "Polk rode out with him."

"Anderson got curious, did he?" grinned Hashknife.

"Yeah, but he never came out himself. By golly, he sure got told a few things the last time he was out here and he don't care to hear 'em again.

"Jim O'Leary said he pitied the men who done this to you boys. Mebby Jim don't believe that yo're dead, 'cause he said they made a mistake in not killin' yuh while they had a chance. He thinks you'll make it hot for 'em, Hashknife."

"What makes him think we know who done it, Uncle Billy?"

"I dunno. Do yuh?"

"We didn't see 'em, nor hear 'em talk."

"Then how—" Uncle Billy rubbed his nose and went back up the stairs. He had been with Hashknife long enough to know that Hashknife answered no questions.

The following morning Cherokee Lee brought a posse with him, consisting of Bill Stivers, Yakima Reed, Chuck Allard, Cliff Montell and Andy Halpern, another of O'Leary's cowboys. They stopped at the ranch-house, while Cherokee questioned Uncle Billy.

"Nothin' new," said Uncle Billy, sizing up the posse. "Takin' quite a crew with yuh, ain't yuh, Cherokee?"

"Lookin' for buzzards," said Cherokee seriously. "Everybody seems to think that we ought to keep on lookin', so I'm takin' enough men along to find most anythin'."

He took them down to the bunk-house and showed them the evidences of the attack, and then over to the log shack, where

they examined the hasp and agreed that it had been forced from inside the shack, as the staple had been forced out sidewise from the soft wood.

"Wasn't a very good fastener," said Yakima Reed, examining the staple.

"I wasn't intendin' it for a jail," said Uncle Billy. "I was goin' to make a meat house out of it, and yuh don't need a time lock to keep a ham from bustin' loose."

The posse laughed at Uncle Billy's retort and rode away to search the hills.

"They might have gone crazy," said Montell. "Looks like the work of a crazy man, Cherokee. What'll we do if we see 'em?"

"I dunno—ride like —— for town, I suppose," Cherokee said it seriously.

"What for?"

"Get another drink and a fresh start, I reckon."

A DANCE in Medicine River was something to date time from. From miles around came the ranchers, bringing their families, even unto the dogs. The dance hall was located above the general store, and the upper floor of the adjoining building was utilized as a dining-room, where the ladies of the town served a chicken dinner at midnight.

Steve Morris, the rotund justice of the peace, was floor manager, and did the "calling" for the square dances, while two fiddles, a banjo, an accordion and a bass viol rendered their own version of popular dance music.

There were few really good dancers in Medicine River. Frank Laskey, by virtue of having danced somewhere in the East, was possibly the most graceful male dancer, according to the female idea. Andrew Jackson Polk was also fairly good, except that his movements were a trifle too staid and dignified.

The rest of them just danced, perspired, limped and drank hard liquor. It seemed that there was a steady procession of males from the dance-hall entrance to the War Paint saloon, and the air of the dance-hall was redolent of a breath-killer called "Sensen," which, when mixed with the fumes of bad whisky, made a combination that was almost anesthetic to the innocent bystander.

And bad whisky played a big part in the Medicine River dances, giving Steve Morris plenty of chance to exert his authority. Too much attention to another man's girl meant immediate trouble, and there was also a great danger of two couples claiming the same position in a quadrille.

Cherokee Lee and Bill Stivers divided their time between the dance-hall and the War Paint, promoting peace as much as possible. No man had ever been jailed in Medicine River for merely fighting, and there was no such a charge as disturbing the peace.

As usual the War Paint's gambling games were doing a big business. A dance meant that every cattle-man would advance his men some money, if they needed it, and they always did. And the War Paint was in business to see that none of it ever went back to the ranch.

Cherokee Lee's posse had ridden back late that evening, tired, but thoroughly satisfied that they could find nothing. To the boys from O'Leary's ranch it meant a long ride out to the ranch for their dance clothes, so they compromised by buying shirts, collars, neckties and some perfume at the store and making their changes in the rear of the War Paint.

To Yakima Reed and Chuck Allard the dance meant nothing. They were not going to dance, anyway. There was considerable discussion over the missing cowboys among the men who lived farther away from Medicine River and had not heard about it.

"Well, we didn't find anythin'," declared Yakima. "I thought that —— sheriff was goin' to keep us out all night. Gimme a drink, bartender."

Charley Deal was off shift and was drinking. But he was one of those cold-blooded individuals whom liquor does not thaw. Always a good dresser, just now he was immaculate—a direct contrast to Yakima and Chuck, who told him of their fruitless quest.

"Cherokee thinks they're dead," said Chuck squinting at his empty glass. "He was always lookin' for buzzards."

"Looking for buzzards?"

"Yeah. Let's have another drink. He thinks that the buzzards will locate the bodies, Charley. You goin' to dance tonight?"

"Maybe."

"They're dancin' now," stated a perspiring cowboy, who pushed in beside them to get a drink. "Gosh, that shore was a swift ol' quadrille. The old floor is as

slickery as grease. Gimme some sody for a chaser. All right, ginger ale will do. Here's go."

He gulped his drink and hurried back. Bill Stivers came in with Andrew Jackson Polk, who was also dressed for the occasion, and Deal invited them to drink.

"Not tonight, thanks," grinned Stivers.

"Why not tonight?" queried Deal coldly.

"Just a li'l idea of mine," laughed Stivers. Deal watched him walk back to a crowd around the roulette wheel and turned to Polk.

"You haven't any idea, have you?" he asked.

"I have an idea that a drink might do me good."

They drank together, along with Yakima and Chuck, who seemed to be trying to get as many drinks as possible in a short length of time.

"You fellows better go easy," advised Deal. "No use being a pair of fools."

"All right," choked Yakima. He and Chuck left the bar.

"Not a brain in the pair," said Deal disgustedly, although he had drank more than both of them.

Above the noise of the saloon they could hear the shrieking of the orchestra and the deep-toned voice of Steve Morris, calling the changes.

"Going to dance?" asked Polk.

"Later—maybe."

The music stopped, and a few moments later the panting dancers came to the saloon, crowding, laughing, indulging in rough horseplay, as they mopped at their foreheads, tugged at tight collars and demanded service.

TWO men came from the darkness near the hitch-rack and halted at the corner of the saloon. One of them was small, slender, wearing ill-fitting clothes and a sombrero pulled low over his eyes. The other was unmistakably Hashknife Hartley.

For several minutes they stood there. Another dance was on, and not until it ended and the men were filing into the saloon that Hashknife patted his companion on the shoulder and gently urged him forward.

There was no word spoken between them. The little cowboy went timidly in, was almost knocked out of the doorway, when another cowboy came out and went singing across the street.

Once inside the saloon the little cowboy moved to a point of vantage and seemed to be intently watching the faces from beneath his sombrero brim. No one noticed him. As the dancers left the bar the little cowboy joined them, came outside and walked to Hashknife, who had drawn back into the shadow.

"Well?" questioned Hashknife anxiously. In reply the little cowboy drew him to the window, where they could get a partial view of the bar.

"Third from the end," said the little cowboy.

Hashknife laughed softly, drew his companion aside, and they went down the street, keeping in the shadow.

A few minutes later Cherokee Lee came down from the dance-hall and stepped out on the sidewalk to run face to face with Hashknife. Cherokee grunted with surprise, but Hashknife drew him down the street before any one else could see him in the lighted entrance.

"Well, what kind of a lie do yuh want me to tell now?" grinned Cherokee.

"A whopper, Sheriff. Will yuh do it?"

"Hm-m-m, I dunno. Prob'ly. My soul is about as black as I can make it now, Hartley. What do yuh want done?"

Hashknife laughed. "I want yuh to put a man in jail."

"Who?"

"Frank Laskey."

"For gosh sake, what for, Hartley?"

"Just for fun. I want yuh to go up in the dance-hall and make the arrest. I don't care how many folks hear it."

"Uh-huh?" Cherokee cleared his throat raspingly. "Well, that's all right—but what'll I arrest him for?"

"Listen, Cherokee," Hashknife's voice had lost its joking tone. "You can wink at Laskey if yuh want to when yuh arrest him. Yuh don't need to announce what he's arrested for, but kinda let folks know that he's under arrest."

"Is it a joke?" queried Cherokee. "Yuh know he can make a lot of trouble out of a thing like that, Hartley."

"Laskey won't—not when he finds out why it was done."

"Uh-huh. Well, all right, Hartley. Want me to do it now?"

"Just as soon as yuh can. I'm dependin' on yuh, 'cause I can't be there to see yuh do it."

"Oh, I'll do it," laughed Cherokee. "Shall I put him in jail?"

"Oh, sure. Make the thing look good, Sheriff."

Cherokee went back to the doorway, wondering if he was doing the right thing, and swearing at Hashknife under his breath for asking him to make a scene in the dance-hall.

Hashknife crossed the street and met Sleepy near the hitch-rack.

"All set?" asked Sleepy anxiously.

"Yeah. Didja see Stivers?"

"He's in the War Paint. I just told him to keep his eyes open, thasall."

"That's enough. C'mon."

The music had stopped, and they could hear sounds of commotion, as several men came down the creaking stairway from the dance-hall. Men were coming out into the street as Hashknife and Sleepy walked around to the rear of the War Paint and went in through the open door.

Yakima Reed and Chuck Allard were drunkenly engrossed in a game of bottle-pool; so engrossed, or so drunk, that they did not pay any attention to Hashknife and Sleepy, who moved in between the pool-table and the end of the bar.

Charley Deal was standing with his back against the bar, his elbows braced on the top, a cigaret dangling from his lower lip. A big poker game was in progress. Hashknife could see Andrew Jackson Polk standing behind Jim O'Leary, intently watching the play.

Bill Stivers was watching the roulette game and had not seen the entrance of Hashknife and Sleepy. In fact, no one had noticed them. Yakima Reed swore at a missed shot and dropped his cue, which clattered to the floor. He stooped to pick it up and when he lifted his head he looked straight at Hashknife and Sleepy.

An expression of bewilderment flashed across his face and he turned his head to see if Chuck Allard had seen the same thing. But Chuck was hunched down, squinting at the pool-balls. Yakima turned and looked at them again, blinking foolishly.

"Well, look who's here!" he blurted.

His exclamation was loud enough for every one in the room to hear. Deal turned his head and looked at them coldly. Stivers began walking slowly toward them. But before any one fully realized that the missing cowboys were here in the flesh, a man came in from the front and halted midway of the room.

"Say!" he exclaimed breathlessly. Cherokee Lee has arrested Frank Laskey and took him to jail!"

The announcement disrupted the games. Hashknife and Sleepy had not moved, but their eyes took in the occupants of the room.

"Frank Laskey!" exploded one of the poker players. "What has he done?"

"I dunno." The cowboy shook his head. "The sheriff won't tell. Arrested him while he was dancin' and put him in jail."

"He talked too much," said Hashknife.

Every one in the room turned at the sound of his voice, which carried conviction. Deal squinted narrowly, but did not move.

"Talked too much?" queried Jim O'Leary, starting to get to his feet.

"Stay where yuh are, O'Leary," said Hashknife. "Laskey turned states evidence tonight."

"Turned what?" blurted another man.

"Evidence on what?"

"What do yuh mean?"

The questions came in a volley.

"He said"—Hashknife hesitated for a moment—"he said that Green framed it all and he told who Green is."

For a moment there was complete silence, broken by Charley Deal's sudden shift of position. His right hand flashed inside his coat and came out holding a revolver.

But as it flashed in the yellow lamplight, the room shook from the concussion of Hashknife's six-shooter, and Deal's gun clattered to the floor. It had all been done so quickly that the crowd had not moved.

Yakima Reed, still holding his billiard cue, was staring at Hashknife. In fact he was still staring when Sleepy's right uppercut caught him and knocked him flat.

As Yakima crashed to the floor, Chuck flung his cue at Sleepy and drew his gun. Dodging the cue probably saved Sleepy's life, because Chuck's first bullet ripped his collar.

Backing toward the rear door, Chuck tried to shoot again, but Sleepy's gun was powder-burning the pool-table top, as he sent shot after shot at the retreating Allard, who crumpled just inside the doorway.

Still the crowd did not scatter. Deal still leaned against the bar, his cold nerve still fighting to keep him upright. Andrew

Jackson Polk had not moved. He seemed a disinterested spectator until he heard Hashknife's voice—

"Polk, yo're next. Pick yore medicine."

The lawyer's eyes slowly turned to the menacing gun muzzle. He tried to speak, but no sound came from his lips. Charley Deal swayed sidewise and fell full length. The room was hazy with powder smoke, when Cherokee Lee came in.

"My ——, what's been goin' on?" he gasped.

"Put yore handcuffs on Polk," said Hashknife coldly.

"On—on Polk?" faltered Cherokee.

"As quick as yuh can."

Cherokee went slowly forward and produced a pair of handcuffs. Polk made no attempt to escape. He seemed old, dazed, shaking his head as though trying to remember what it was all about.

"I heard the shooting," said Cherokee.

"Yuh better put some cuffs on this jigger, too," said Sleepy, indicating Yakima, who was showing signs of returning consciousness.

"But what's it all about?" Cherokee asked.

"Yakima Reed and Chuck Allard murdered Parker Miller," said Hashknife. "Allard has paid for his part in it, but yuh better put a rope on Yakima, Sheriff."

It did not take the crowd long to find a rope, and Yakima awoke to find himself well trussed, and a crowd willing to tie another around his neck. But Cherokee talked them out of a lynching and took his prisoners to jail.

Yakima refused to talk and Polk seemed unable. They stumbled into the jail, where Frank Laskey's pale face looked at them through the bars.

"I'll have to put you fellers together in a cell," said Cherokee to Polk, as he unlocked the other cell.

"Laskey didn't have anythin' to do with it, did he?" asked Cherokee, after locking the cell-door. "I don't *sabe* what the joke was all about, Hartley."

"Yeah, Laskey had plenty to do with it," said Hashknife. "It was Laskey who furnished the original mortgage of the Diamond H to make the forgery from. Deal sold the ranch to Ma Holton. He was the only man in the town who was a stranger to her.

"Deal, Yakima and Allard stole the Diamond H cattle, took 'em to Silver Lake, where they shipped 'em. Polk was the smart man of the crowd. He made out the legal papers for the ranch sale. He had a theory that most robbers give themselves away by spendin' the money right away, so he made 'em put the money all in his safe.

"The day that Ma Holton came back to the Diamond H, Charley Deal pulled out of the country. He couldn't afford to have her recognize him. I reckon the gang thought that as soon as she found out that she had lost all her money, she'd vamoose and Charley could come back.

"Anyway, just to play safe, they raided the ranch and stole the papers. It kinda had me guessin' for a while. Then came the murder of Parker Miller and the bank robbery. Laskey said that those robbers were masked. I figured that Miller was killed because he recognized them. And then I figured that he recognized 'em because they wasn't masked.

"THEY came in the back door. It ain't a usual thing for a back door in a bank to be open thataway. Laskey said he opened it on account of the heat. He did, like ——. He opened it so that Yakima Reed and Chuck Allard could come in, take the money he had already sacked up for 'em, shoot Miller, and sneak back into Polk's office, where the money was put in Polk's safe."

The jail was crowded with interested listeners; the dance forgotten.

"How do yuh know it was in Polk's safe?" asked Cherokee.

"Because," Hashknife laughed, "I hit Polk over the head, unlocked his old key-lock safe with his own key, and took the money out to the Diamond H ranch."

"My ——!" Stivers began to see a light. "That was the night we told Polk that he had been dreamin'."

"How much money was there?" asked Cherokee weakly. Disclosures were coming almost too fast for him to keep track of them.

"Eighteen thousand dollars."

"Eighteen thousand!"

"And that's what they came out to the ranch after the other night," laughed Hashknife. "It was under the doorstep of the bunk-house, wrapped up in a piece of canvas—except for the twenty-five hundred dollars I spent for the Diamond H."

"I told 'em!" crowed O'Leary. "Didn't I tell Polk and Laskey that—"

The jar of a pistol shot stopped O'Leary from repeating what he had told Laskey and Polk. Cherokee sprang to the cell bars

and peered inside. He turned back to Hashknife.

"Dang it, I thought his arrest was a joke, Hartley, so I didn't search him for a weapon. The law won't try Frank Laskey."

"I'm sorry," said Hashknife. "I wanted at least one prisoner, and I wanted his arrest to shock Charley Deal into admittin' that he was Green. Why, I even had Ma Holton identify Deal. She thought he was the same man."

"But she couldn't be sure—not sure enough. And I knew that they could stand pat and ruin all my schemes. I had the money, but that was all. I knew that the theft of it would bring Green back. And Charley Deal was the only man that came back, so I called him Green and worked everythin' from that."

"By golly, don't you feel sorry?" said Cherokee. "Mebbe it's a lot better for Laskey. Anyway, two out of five is a pretty good average."

Anderson shoved his way to the front. He was trembling with excitement, hardly able to talk. Some one near the door had told him that Laskey had shot himself.

"This is terrible!" he exclaimed. "Three men dead. And what good has it done?"

"It pays for the murder of Parker Miller," said Hashknife. "And I've got about seventy-five hundred dollars that belongs to yore bank, Anderson."

"Seventy-five hundred? Why, that's what was stolen. This is really wonderful!"

"Aw, ——!" blurted Hashknife, and shoved his way out through the crowd.

Yakima Reed came to the bars of his cell and stared out at the crowd which moved in closer to look at him.

"I'd like to say somethin'," he said.

"You better keep still until yuh get a lawyer," advised Cherokee.

Yakima spat painfully, "The —— I had! Say, if I hadn't listened to a —— lawyer I wouldn't be where I am now. I jist want to say that I'd like to know who in —— told all this to Hartley."

"He was right, wasn't he?" asked Cherokee.

"——, yes! I wanted to kill the both of 'em the other night at the Diamond H but Polk thought we'd never find that money if we did, so we dumped 'em in the log shack."

"Yo're tellin' quite a lot," warned Cherokee.

"Aw, what's the difference? We were awful suckers to not fade out of the country when we heard that they'd got out of that shack. Me and Chuck wanted to pull out, but Polk—say, if any of you fellers ever figure on pullin' off a crooked deal, don't take the advice of any —— lawyer."

"Which one of you fellers killed Miller?" asked Cherokee.

"Neither one of us. Laskey done it himself."

"Tryin' to save yore neck?" asked O'Leary.

"It's the only neck I've got, Jim."

"Well, we'll leave it to the law," said Cherokee.

"Then I lose. You better take this lawshark out of my cell, before I plumb ruin him, sheriff. He's settin' there, thasall."

Over at the War Paint hitch-rack four people grouped together beside an old buckboard.

Hashknife leaned back against a front wheel of the buckboard and puffed on his cigaret.

"Yuh can take eight thousand dollars and buy enough stock to kinda build up the old brand again," said Sleepy, grinning at the little cowboy who had removed his sombrero, exposing the white hair of Ma Holton.

"I—I can't stand many more shocks," she said wearily.

Uncle Billy began chuckling, "I never thought I'd live to see my wife wearin' boots and overalls and goin' into saloons."

"And I wanted a dance with ma this evenin'," complained Hashknife. "Been lookin' forward to it quite a while."

"Blame Uncle Billy," said ma.

"I'll take it," said the old man. "After what's happened I'll take blame for most anythin'."

"Well, let's go home," suggested Hashknife. "A lot of these Medicine River cowpunchers heard me say that the money was under the bunk-house door-step—and I want to put my head on a piller tonight and feel sure that somebody ain't goin' to start another mystery here."

A few minutes later, while the dance orchestra rattled into the "Irish Washerwoman" and the stentorian voice of Steve Morris ordered, "Right hands to your partners—grand right and left," a decrepit buckboard, drawn by a mismated pair of horses, rattled out of town. And behind it rode two cowpunchers, who, for the first time since they became range tramps—were heading home.

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

AN INQUIRY for Didier Masson and Tommy Dean at an earlier Camp-Fire brought information from four comrades at two following Camp-Fires and now here is a letter from Didier Masson himself. As he himself puts it, it is now needless to tell us that he was not killed in the war. But he doesn't know where Tommy Dean is and would like to locate him. You'll remember one comrade had general information pointing to Dean's being comfortably alive. Mr. Masson would also like to get in touch with any one having photographs of the bombs exploding when they hit the water. His letter will show that he has very good reason to be interested in the exploding of those bombs.

Ixlu, Peten, Guatemala.

In your number of February last, in the part of the *Adventure* dedicated to Camp-Fire, there is a letter from a party in Empalme, Sonora, Mexico, asking where I was. I am now in Guatemala, riding a slow mule during the rainy season.

I am very much interested to know myself what has become of Tommy Dean, who was my mechanic, while flying round Guaymas in 1913. I have tried to locate him, but always unsuccessfully. His father was living in Salt Lake City, but the letters that I sent to his father's address have never been answered.

The person who wrote the article in the Camp-Fire, must have certainly been an amused spectator to the bombing of the *Guerrero* and *Tampico*. The details that he is giving about the flight show me that he must have been there.

Some photos were taken at the time showing the bombs exploding in contact with the water. I have seen few of them, and as all my souvenirs have been destroyed in a fire, would like to be in touch with the persons that still have the negatives.

IN ADDITION to the relation of the forced landing, as related by the correspondent, I will add a detail that could not have been seen by him. When the motor stopped, not by a broken gasoline pipe, but by the oil pipe, with the result of the motor being frozen solid, I yelled to Tommy to let go the bombs, as our only possible salvation was to land in Empalme, speculating on the Federals being absent from there.

The bombs were fastened to the machine in such a way that, by pulling a string, the safety-pin was first pulled off and after would pull on a hook that would let the bomb fall from the machine. So, after telling him to let go, he pulled on all the strings. I was then looking round for a field big enough to land. I had to get that field far enough from the beach, so as not to be under the direct fire of the gunboats, and also to get away rapidly in case the Federals did occupy the place.

I could see that Tommy was looking under the plane but I was myself busy with problems of my own at the time, so did not ask him what was the matter. By that time the Federals were shooting for all they were worth (not much), the whistling of the wire of the gliding plane, etc., etc., all these circumstances were against a little chat. So, finally, the landing was made in a narrow bit of field. One negro came along to tell us that the Federals were in Guaymas, but were now on the bridge coming over to Empalme.

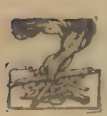
Our duty then was to beat it, and we certainly did fulfill that. But, before getting off, Tommy showed me a bomb that was still hanging at the end of the string. Why that bomb did not explode while I was landing is still a mystery to me.

I was a pilot during the World War and I have seen lots of nervy things. But, still, I consider Tommy's behavior one of the best I have seen. He knew all the time that the bomb was on the end of the string and that the chances were that it would explode while landing. He kept his mouth shut, believing, I suppose, that knowing I was trailing 5 kilos of dynamite would not help me in the then difficult job of getting the plane safely to the ground.

You know the rest, Trujillo came along with some horses, got the machine out, the way you were explaining.

I suppose that it is now useless to tell you that I was not killed during the war. As stated before, I am now riding a slow mule in the swamps of Northern Guatemala, covering now in 15 days what I used to cover in a couple of hours before.

Hoping to hear from you or any person with whom I was connected during my stay in Northern Mexico, I remain,—DIDIER MASSON, Care P. W. Shufeldt y Cia, Belize, British Honduras, C. A.



HERE are the footnotes originally intended for Gordon Young's "Days of '49," bearing on this third instalment. They are here keyed to the text merely according to chapter.

Chapter XX

"Had I not been snowed in at Coloma, Sacramento would never, never have been founded."—Capt. Sutter in a statement to Hubert Howe Bancroft.

"At the close of 1848 there were at the embarcadero only two houses, one a drinking saloon, the other occupied by the Stewart family, and a dismantled ship. . . . It was a place surging with speculation and uproarious with traffic; profits reaching more than a 100 per cent above the rates accepted at the city on the bay (San Francisco), and rents ruling as high as $5000 per month for a building, while lots crept up to $30,000. Notwithstanding the flimsiness of the structures, their value toward the close of 1849 was estimated at $2,000,000."—Bancroft's History of California, vol. vi. p. 447 seq.

Ryan makes this statement in his *Personal Adventures*, but it would hardly apply to other than the earliest part of the boom times in Sacramento.

Dr. Knower, in Adventures of a Forty-Niner, p. 139, tells of a man who came from Salem, Mass., "traveling 1800 miles to get to the gold mines," then at Stockton turned back. Dr. Knower gave him passage back to the city.

The author (anonymous) of California Illustrated p. 74, tells of two men who got all they wanted of gold-digging the first day and returned to Sacramento.

Chapter XXII

This incident did not occur until the spring of 1852, but it is authentically characteristic of the "days of '49." Related in *Popular Tribunals*. 2 vol. By Hubert Howe Bancroft, San Francisco. 1887. Vol. i. p. 522.

Chapter XXIV

The Hounds this day got up courage for the assault on the Spanish quarter by smashing glasses and dishes in saloons when not served promptly and cheerfully; and he gives this as the "platform" of the so-called Society of Regulators, which was the name recently adopted by the Hounds: "California should feed and clothe them, and pay them well for their outrages. They proposed to live. They would assist at any time the impotent authorities, if the authorities wished their aid and would pay them; and they would just as readily break the law, and defy the authorities, if such a course best suited their purpose. With the coolest impudence they asserted their determination to protect American citizens against Spanish-speaking foreigners, and sometimes claimed to have instructions from the Alcade to extirpate the Mexicans and Chileans."—Bancroft in *Popular Tribunals*, Vol. 1, Chapter vi, p. 92.

This description of the violence and shamefulness of the attack, the apathy of the better class of citizens while it was going on all through the night, follows Bancroft's account almost literally.—*Popular Tribunals*, Vol. 1.

There was, as far as historians have learned, much less provocation for the Hounds' attack than this story relates. As nearly as Bancroft could discover it came about because a merchant gave to the Hound Sheriff, Pullis, a bill which a Chilean had refused to pay; the Sheriff turned the bill over to the "boys" to collect.

Bancroft says: "I can but call attention once more to the singular state of law and administration which allowed an officer of the law to deputize a notorious band of desperadoes for the lawless

enforcement of an unproven claim."—*Popular Tribunals.* Vol. i, p. 93.

"The charge was made at the time that the Hounds were instigated to their excesses by influential men,"—*San Francisco*: A History. 2 Vol. By John Young. San Francisco, N. D. Vol. i, p. 201.

"Bad as were physical conditions in 1849, the social conditions were even worse. The town was full of gamblers, thieves, and cutthroats from every quarter of the globe. Society there was none. Every man was a law to himself and by midsummer disorder reigned. An organization, formed from the riffraff of the disbanded regiment of New York volunteers, joined by Australian convicts and the scum of the town, paraded the streets with drum and fife and streaming banners. They called themselves Hounds or Regulators, and under the pretense of watching over public security, intruded themselves in every direction and committed all sorts of outrageous acts. Relying on the strength of numbers and arms they levied forced contributions upon the merchants for the support of their organization. . . . The culmination of their reign was reached when, on the night of July 15th, 1849, they made an attack in force upon the Chileno quarter at the foot of Telegraph Hill, robbing, beating and seriously wounding the inhabitants and destroying their tents and houses."—*The Beginnings of San Francisco.* Vol. ii, p. 598.

Chapter XXV

1. This sentence, "The capacity of a people for self-government was never so triumphantly illustrated," is often quoted by writers on Early California and is from Taylor's *El Dorado.*

Chapter XXIX

1. A full account of the excitement of the citizens and of Brannan's theatrical courage appears in *Popular Tribunals.* Vol. 1.

"Samuel Brannan, born in Saco, Maine, 1819, was a natural speculator, and early in life he traveled in every State of the Union. . . . He surprised thousands of persons by his reckless extravagance of money, his bold speculations, his bravery in defying the criminal class, and finally his dissipation, for he became a continuous drinker. He spent thousands of dollars for and with his friends, and died a pauper, crippled and diseased, almost alone, in Escondido, Mexico, May 7, 1888."—*California: Men and Events.* p. 42.

"In ridding San Francisco of the thieves, gamblers and desperadoes that infested it none were more active, out spoken, and fearless than Brannan, and he lashed the malefactors and their official supporters with a vigor of vituperation that has rarely been equaled."—*The Beginnings of San Francisco.* Vol. ii, p. 711.

"So long as society holds its course in San Francisco his name should be held in honored and grateful remembrance. With the utmost recklessness he threw his life and wealth into the scale; anything and everything he possessed was at the disposal of the (Vigilance) committee free of any charge."—Bancroft in *Popular Tribunals.* Vol. i, p. 209.

2. The statement that no man was ever hanged in San Francisco without at least the semblance of a trial is confirmed by the Reference Dept. of the San Francisco Public Library, in so far as the library records show.

3. "Under the existing laws of the United States, foreigners had the same rights in California as American citizens."—*Popular Tribunals.* Vol. i, p. 101.

Chapter XXXII

1. "After the conviction of the captured Regulators the question arose how they should be punished. Some were for having them hanged, others for having them whipped upon the public Plaza and banished, and others simply for having them banished and given to understand that if they ever returned they would be executed . . . the infliction of the several penalties being found impracticable, and the people having gone about their business, some of the prisoners were shipped away and others discharged. The gang however was broken up and crime for the moment checked."—*Popular Tribunals.* Vol. i, p. 100.

2. Col. Geary, elected Alcade on Aug. 1st, 1849, so addressed the first meeting of the new city council, or ayuntamiento.

IN CONSIDERING the genuineness of "A Recruit with Walker" as the narrative of actual experiences in Nicaragua under William Walker let us begin at the beginning.

Most of you know Robert Welles Ritchie as a writer of both fact and fiction. I have known him personally for some twelve or fourteen years, know many others who know him and my opinion of his integrity is of the highest. In May, 1924, I received a letter from him, the pertinent part of which is as follows:

Carmel, California.

My boyhood was spent in the little sheep town of Red Bluff, California. Back in those early Nineties there was a man named Uncle Al DeShields who used to sit in front of his blacksmith shop and tell us stories of a soldier named William Walker, and how he "fit" with Walker in a strange, faraway place called Nicaragua.

Last week I happened to revisit Red Bluff for the first time since 1892, and I asked for Uncle Al De Shields. He died ten years ago, they said; but a boyhood friend of mine, now superintendent of schools, had taken down Uncle Al's story and had it stowed away in an old trunk. I went forthwith to see this friend, J. D. Sweeney; he dug out the old Ms. and let me read it.

It was the old story I'd heard in front of the blacksmith shop—crude, full of guts, full also of historical sidelights on William Walker, conqueror of Nicaragua.

I told Sweeney he ought to have the thing published. He had but the single Ms. and demurred when I suggested he let me send it on to you. Finally I persuaded him to let me have it. Because he thinks it so precious—and perhaps it is—I am writing you thus to ask if you care to see it.

As to the genuineness of old Uncle Al's claim to having been a soldier under Walker I have no way of checking up. Perhaps the New York library would help you do this; some obscure reference may carry a list of names.

If you buy it you can communicate with J. D. Sweeney, Supt. of Schools, Red Bluff, California. If you wish to see the story let me urge that you take considerable care of it to vindicate my stewardship.—ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE.

NATURALLY I was anxious to see the Ms. and wrote to Mr. Sweeney. It reached our office June 30 and proved interesting reading. We set to work to see what proof or disproof of its genuineness we could uncover, working at intervals and as new leads appeared. By December, 1924, we had not been able to disprove it and purchased it for the magazine.

A first step had been an appeal to one of our writers' brigade, Eugene Cunningham, of San Francisco, who had made a thorough study of all he could get hold of on General Walker. The following letter gives an insight into how conscientiously he strove for any bit of evidence that might be decisive:

San Francisco, California.

I have corrected one impression about the rolls and must correct a statement made from memory—that in the books I've gone through was any mention of specific rolls, or of the ultimate fate of all the records of Walker's administration. I was thinking of a statistical report—or, rather, three such reports—made by General Charles F. Henningsen, Walker's second-in-command, a trained and conscientious soldier. But I find that those three reports were quoted from clippings in what are known as "The Wheeler Scrapbooks."

Wheeler was American Minister to Nicaragua from '54 to '57, recalled for pro-Walker actions. An indefatigable scrapbook-compiler. According to Ashe ("Biographical History of North Carolina," Ill. 492) twenty of the scrapbooks are in the Library of Congress, four dealing with Walker in Nicaragua. (I'd give a good deal to be able to see them!)

I'll try two other leads I think of. One is particularly promising—practically duplicating anything Scroggs could say—and is open to me, particularly, through Scottish Rite affiliations: A check-up on the documents in the possession of Henningsen, who, at the time or near the time of his death, was an employe of the Library of the Supreme Council, Thirty-Third Degree, Southern Jurisdiction.

What you say of the narrative is very interesting to me. Surely it *is* those points of homely detail, of individual view, that make a true narrative convincing—and are the hardest to get into a fiction.—CUNNINGHAM.

IN THE attempt to find somewhere a list of the men who served with Walker I wrote to Washington and received the following:

Department of State
Washington
September 5, 1924.

In reply, I beg to inform you that the records of this Department do not disclose any roster of the men under Walker's command nor any information concerning the services of Mr. DeShields.

A LETTER to the U. S. Naval Academy brought forth one valuable bit of evidence:

United States Naval Academy
Annapolis, Maryland
18 July, 1924

Our records show that an Alfred P. DeShields was admitted to the Naval Academy from the Second Congressional District of Louisiana on 23 September, 1854. Upon being found deficient in Algebra, he was required to resign in June, 1856.

Very truly yours,
G. W. KENYON,
Commander, U. S. Navy,
Aid to Superintendent.

IT IS then established that an Alfred P. DeShields attended the Naval Academy between September, 1854, and June, 1856. There seems no doubt as to its being the same DeShields, name, age and birthplace coinciding. The date of his leaving Annapolis fits in with his joining Walker later in the same year.

MR. CUNNINGHAM appealed to Professor W. O. Scroggs, recognized as probably the best authority on Walker. His reply follows, with a note from Mr. Cunningham at the end:

Brooklyn, New York.

I regret that I know nothing of one DeShields or of the final disposition of Walker's State papers. When Walker evacuated and burned Granada, he must have taken his papers with him. He spent a good part of his time—some weeks—thereafter, on board one of the lake steamers. Then he was surrounded at Rivas, you know, after some rapid shifting between that place and Virgin Bay. Whether he was able to safeguard his archives during this time is a question.

If they were stored on one of the steamers they must have fallen into the hands of the Costa Ricans, but Montufar, the Costa Rican historian, would certainly have seen them and used them if they had been saved and taken to San José. On the other hand, if the papers had been brought to the United States, Walker would certainly have used them when he compiled his book.—W. O. SCROGGS.

I wonder if the fate of Walker's stuff is to remain one of those mystery-things? This remark of Prof. Scroggs' is very pertinent; a detail I hadn't considered. From what I know it's a very practical solution of the dilemma, and yet—I can't quite accept it. For Walker, in his own history, apologizing for use of memory in certain details, says, in effect, "I am a long way from my papers." It seems to me that if he had lost his papers he would have said so, directly. "You ask me what my chieftain said? He rarely *said*, he simply *did!*" as Joaquin Miller remarks. He said what he meant. If Miss

McGrath, daughter of General John T. McGrath, an educated Walker-man, lately deceased, doesn't know anything about the records, I'll confess myself stumped.—CUNNINGHAM.

WE FINALLY got into touch with Miss McGrath but there was no roster of Walker's men among her father's papers.

It happened that about this time, Arthur D. Howden Smith of our writers' brigade, knowing nothing of the DeShields matter, had, after a good deal of delving into Walker material, decided to write a novel centered upon the Nicaragua campaign. You will remember that he appealed to Camp-Fire for any data that might throw new light on the subject. I asked him to read the DeShields narrative. He did so and wrote:

Jan. 28, 1925.

I have been through the DeShields Ms. with much interest. I should say that attention ought to be called to the fact that the author wrote or dictated his recollections some fifty or sixty years after the events described; also that his judgment of men and events does not always coincide with known facts. For instance, he asperses the courage of Col. Rogers, Walker's Commissary General. Now, Rogers was one of the Thirteen—ten officers and three privates—who made the famous charge at second Rivas, which turned the tide, one of the pluckiest exploits in all history. They defeated 150 men, killing 30 or more of 'em. Rogers, also, when the Atlantic route into Nicaragua was closed to Walker, who was besieged in Rivas, made a lone journey to Panama, impressed a native boatman there, and in an open boat sailed the 500 miles north to San Juan del Sur, whence he penetrated the enemy's lines and reached Walker, the only man of the 500 or more cut off on the Atlantic coast to get through and rejoin his chief. The man had more guts than he knew what to do with. DeShields' judgment of Walker, also, is very unfair, although that's largely a matter of opinion. Still, he doesn't agree with the men who knew W. best, or with so impartial an historian as Scroggs.

On the subject of DeShields, I stopped in yesterday to see my friend ——, the American expert. He had just bought a very rare item: "The Last of the Filibusters" by a Californian who was with W. It had a list of the survivors of the garrison of Rivas who were brought north from Aspinwall in an American war-vessel, the *Roanoke*, aboard which De Shields claims he went. A rather hasty scrutiny of the list—which I will repeat next time I go to town—failed to reveal DeShields' name. But it would be unfair to attach too much importance to that, as it could be accounted for by the usual journalistic faults of omission. Incidentally, —— agreed with me that, as I had suggested to you, your DeShields was a brother of the T. D. DeShields who was joint-author of "Border Wars of Texas." —— said that this alone would be ground for doubting the value of his recollections! However I don't agree with him there, at least not entirely.—A. D. H. S.

A LATER letter from Mr. Smith:

About DeShields. His "brother's" name was James T. Since writing you last I have completed a study of the files of the *N. Y. Herald*, 1856-57, and yesterday came on a roster of the survivors of Walker's men who were ferried north in the *Wabash*. De Shields was not among them. He says he came on the *Roanoke*, and as you know, a cursory survey of the list of her company, as given in "The Last of the Filibusters" did not show his name While I was examining this, Eberstadt and Seymour Dunbar, author of "The History of Travel in America," were talking, and I was keeping an ear on them as well as two eyes on the book. So I might have missed what I was looking for, but I don't think so. —A. D. H. S.

THAT, on the whole, is contrary evidence, yet DeShields, unless reporting in those days was more infallible than at present, might well have been on the *Roanoke* and yet not be reported as so being. Mr. Smith frankly states that some points are merely a matter of opinion. The guess as to our DeShields being a brother of T. D. Shields seems proved incorrect by Mr. Sweeney's (following) mention of Brit and Edward M. as, apparently, the only brothers of Alfred. In Mr. Smith's second letter I'm not sure whose brother was James T., but it can hardly be Alfred's.

WITH the DeShields Ms. came a note from Mr. Sweeney:

Until recently, Alfred P. DeShields was an honored resident of Red Bluff, and a trusted employee of the Sierra Lumber Company. The writer often listened to his story of adventure with William Walker, the noted filibuster, and as often urged him to write his story. After several years and a short time before he died at a ripe old age, he related his story fully and the writer arranged it with a view to retaining as far as possible the exact words of the old soldier. The story is herewith presented for what worth it may be to history and posterity.—J. D. SWEENEY, Superintendent City Schools, Red Bluff, California.

ON BEING asked for a more detailed statement concerning DeShields Mr. Sweeney promptly supplied the following:

Red Bluff, California.

Alfred DeShields, whose story of adventure with the Walker expedition follows, was born in Louisiana, February 12, 1838 His father was a physician and planter and as such was the holder of a large number of slaves. During the war between the States the wealth of the family was swept away.

At an early age, Alf, as he was usually called, entered the Naval Academy at Annapolis where he was for a time a room-mate of George Dewey, later the hero of Manilla Bay. DeShields did not remain

long at school and the next known of him was when he joined Walker in the expedition which he describes in this story. Later, his father served as a Mexican consul and the son, in whose veins ran fighting blood, fought in one of the many numerous rebellions which marked the path of our sister republic.

EARLY in the sixties, DeShields came west to California, and at the time of his marriage to Miss Elizabeth McDermott he was superintendent of the Gould and Curry Mill in Nevada. At this time he was twenty-eight years old. About 1868, the family moved to Tehama County, California, which became their home until the death of the two parents. A short exception to this was that DeShields spent a short time in Mexicao acting as an interpreter as he had learned to speak Spanish with fluency.

While his brother, Brit, was county clerk, Alfred acted as a deputy in the office. Brit was a pioneer official of the county as was likewise another brother, Edward M., who was also a deputy under the same brother and later held the same position for many years under other clerks except a short time when he was clerk himself and later when he was the first elected auditor for the county, which position he held until his death.

DURING his later years, Alfred was a trusted employee of the Sierra Lumber Company whose headquarters was at Red Bluff. This company was one of the pioneer lumber companies of the State and one of the largest as well. DeShields died on July 16, 1914, just before the opening of the great war. His wife followed him a few years later. They had a family of ten children, nine of whom grew to manhood and womanhood. One daughter, Mrs. Ned Zaniboni, still resides in Red Bluff.—J. D. SWEENEY.

IT SEEMS to me that if DeShields was a liar he should be ranked as a genius—he could have made a great name for himself as a writer of fiction. The fiction writers among you will recognize the fact that, if his narrative is fiction, it is, despite its crudities, exceedingly good fiction in such essentials as characterizations and the homely details of every day living—in general convincingness. He might, of course, have got his material from some man who had been with Walker, but, even so, his fiction accomplishment would be remarkable.

Personally I do not believe he was a fabricator. His reputation during his forty or fifty years in California seems of the best. Many people heard his story, many of them intelligent and critical listeners, yet his reliability seems not to have been questioned. If so gifted as a prevaricator, he would hardly have confined himself to a single prevarication. And forty or fifty years ago the Walker episode was fresh in men's minds and there were survivors who might well have punctured a story made up out of thin air.

But that is only my personal opinion and I realize fully that DeShields' narrative is not established as genuine by the hard and fast proof required before testimony can be accepted as proved history. On the other hand, it is not yet proved otherwise by the same test. It is, at the least, an exceedingly interesting document, and very possibly one that is of decided value as a, historical record. It is put into your hands for your judgment and for whatever assistance you can give toward settling the question of its exact historical importance.

In any case we are in Mr. Sweeney's debt for his recognition of its possibilities and for his painstaking effort in transferring the story of Alfred P. DeShields to paper. Also to Mr. Ritchie, Eugene Cunningham and A. D. H. Smith.

DeShields' notes at the end of his narrative, suggesting that he himself wrote out his narrative and gave it in written form to Mr. Sweeney, may confuse other readers as they did us of the staff. We referred the question to Mr. Sweeney and he replied that DeShields dictated the narrative in his own manner, signed, and asked that the story as then written be given to his wife; that a copy was duly given her and that he gave the story to Mr. Sweeney to use as he could. DeShields also told him the story had never been written before. Mr. Sweeney tells us he wrote the article as near as possible to the oral story, the only revision being that of grammar and dictation and that otherwise it is DeShields' story in his own words.

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Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

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These services of *Adventure*, mostly free, are open to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

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Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

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A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Missing Friends or Relatives

(*See Lost Trails in next issue.*)

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL BUY: October, 1914; and February and May, 1915 issues at $1 each.—Address RUDOLPH R. KREBS, 405 West Milwaukee Avenue, Port Atkinson, Wisconsin.

WILL BUY: Issues for April and May, 1917. Would appreciate even the loan of them.—Address AMOS H. WEIGEL, Standard Publishing Co., 681 Fifth Ave., New York City.

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To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

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(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts

QUESTIONS should be sent not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**

2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**

3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**

4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**

5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAH BROWN, Couperville, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESENBERG, Apartment 347-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the U. S., Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. Islands Part 3 Cuba
WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Warner Sugar Co. of Cuba, Miranda, Oriente, Cuba. Geography, industries, people, customs, hunting, fishing, history and government.

7. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
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CHARLES BROWN, JR., Boite No. 167, Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, South Pacific Ocean. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

9. ★ Australia and Tasmania
PHILLIP NORMAN, 842 Military Rd., Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

11. ★ New Guinea
L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, *via* Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring,

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commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (*Send International Reply Coupon for eleven cents.*)

12. Philippine Islands.
BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4, Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

13. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 1402 Lytton Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

14. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

15. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan
GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

17. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters
CAPTAIN C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure*. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

18. ★ Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan
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CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

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(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

26. ✠ Africa Part 8 Sudan
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J. F. EDWARDS, David Lane, East Hampton, N. Y. Travel, history, geography, politics, races, languages, customs, commerce, outdoor life, general information.

28. Asia Minor
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29. Bulgaria, Roumania
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30. Albania
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

31. Jugo-Slavia and Greece
LIEUT. WILLIAM JENNA, Fort Clayton, Panama, C. Z. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

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35. ✠ Great Britain
THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

36. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile
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J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

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C. R. MAHAFFEY, Box 304, San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

42. Mexico Part 3 Southeastern
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A. D. L. ROBINSON, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing; farm locations, wild lands, national parks. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

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T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

47. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
(Editor to be appointed.) Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

48. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
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fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Send International Reply Coupon for three cents.*)

50. Canada Part 8 Newfoundland

C. T. JAMES, Bonaventure Avenue, St. Johns, Newfoundland. Hunting, fishing, trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography; general information. (*Send International Reply Coupon for five cents*)

51. Canada Part 9 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island.

FRED L. BOWDEN, 312 High Street, Newark, N. J. Lumbering, hunting, fishing, trapping, auto and canoe trips, topography, farming and homesteading; general information.

52. Alaska

THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 6720 Leland Way, Hollywood, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

53. Baffinland and Greenland

VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

54. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.

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59. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.

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61. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure*. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

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63. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River

GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See section 64.*)

64. Middle Western U. S. Part 5 Great Lakes

H. C. GARDNER, 1099 Stout St., Denver, Colo. Seamanship, navigation, courses and distances, reefs and shoals, lights and landmarks, charts; laws, fines, penalties; river navigation.

65. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Adirondacks, New York; Lower Miss. (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms, North and East Shores of Lake Mich.

RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. Transcontinental and other auto-trail tours (Lincoln, National, Old Santa Fé, Yellowstone, Red Ball, Old Spanish Trail, Dixie Highway, Ocean to Ocean, Pike's Peak); regional conditions, outfits, suggestions; skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake tripping and cruising; trapping; fresh water and button shelling; wildcraft, camping, nature study.

66. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers

HOWARD A. SHANNON, care *Adventure*. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

67. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville

HOWARD A. SHANNON, care *Adventure*. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

68. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

69. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala. Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.

HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure*. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

70. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine

DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main St., Bangor, Me. For all territory *west* of the Penobscot River. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

71. Eastern U. S. Part 7 Eastern Maine

H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. For all territory *east* of the Penobscot River. Hunting, fishing, canoeing, mountaineering, guides; general information.

72. Eastern U. S. Part 8 Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I. and Mass.

HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 35 Dawson Ave., West Haven, Conn. Fishing, hunting, travel, roads; business conditions; history.

73. Eastern U. S. Part 9 New Jersey

FRANCIS H. BENT, Jr., Farmingdale, N. J. Topography, hunting, fishing; automobile routes; history; general information.

74. Eastern U. S. Part 10 Maryland

LAWRENCE EDMUND ALLEN, 201 Bowery Ave., Frostburg, Md. Mining, touring, summer resorts, historical places, general information.

A.—Radio

DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, Box 958, Ketchikan, Alaska. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads —songs of outdoor men sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1. —All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure*.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Forestry in the United States

ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass. Big-game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild-animal life in the forests.

G.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure*. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

H.—Aviation

LIEUT.-COL. W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., 2940 Newark St. N. W., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

I.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

FRED. F. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure*. *United States:* Military history, Military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general, "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

J.—Navy Matters

LIEUT. FRANCIS V. GREENE, U. S. N. R., 245 Bergen Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Regulations, history, customs, drill gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered.

K.-American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

ARTHUR WOODWARD, 1244½ Leighton Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

L.—First Aid on the Trail

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake-bite; industrial first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds. First-aid outfits. Meeting all health hazards of the outdoor life, arctic, temperate and tropical zones.

M.—Health-Building Outdoors

CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Falls City, Neb. How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel. Tropical hygiene. General health-building, safe exercise, right food and habits, with as much adaptation as possible to particular cases.

N.—Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada

R. T. NEWMAN, 1001 Park St., Anaconda, Mont. General-office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General information.

O.—Herpetology

DR. G. K. NOBLE, American Museum of Natural History, 77th St., and Central Park West, New York, N. Y. General information concerning reptiles (snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodiles) and amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders); their customs, habits and distribution.

P.—Entomology

DR. FRANK E. LUTZ, Ramsey, N. J. General information about insects and spiders; venomous insects, disease-carrying insects, insects attacking man, etc.; distribution.

Q.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write LAURENCE JORDAN, care *Adventure*.

For general information on **U. S. and its possessions** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash, D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries**, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico**, and customs receivierships in **Santo Domingo** and **Haiti**, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska**, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For **Hawaii**, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.**

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **State Police of any State**, FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., Farmingdale, N. J.

For **Canal Zone**, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National Rifle Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y. 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States Revolver Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Wash., D. C.

For whereabouts of **Navy men**, Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Wash., D. C.

Crossbows

AM IT IS not easy to make one of these antique weapons, but they can be bought:

Request:—"I have heard and read a lot about crossbows and would like to get some information about them, as to types and construction.

Can you give me directions as to making one? The wood used? How to handle them? Do the arrows differ from arrows used in straight bow? Any other information would be appreciated very much."—EDWARD FELDMAN, Elizabeth, N. J.

Reply, by Mr. Barker:—Most decidedly, I could not instruct you how to make a crossbow. They were of several different varieties, none of which would be easy to make, and practically impossible for you today.

The bow was of metal—steel—and required mechanism to draw it back. The latch had what was known as a goat's foot lever, a heavy contrivance of metal, with which to bend the bow. This was usually detached, but sometimes attached to the weapon. The heavy bow with windlass, called a *moulinet* and a *tours*. This was detached, consisting of two cranks and two pulleys, and the bow had a stirrup. These were particularly used for the defense of ramparts. The *cranequin* had a crank and gear toothed arrangement that could be attached. The bow, *agalet* (missiles being stones), which had a lever affixed to the stock. The barreled bow, not of so great strength, which was bent by means of a stick or by hand.

The arrows, called quarrels or bolts, do differ from those used for a long bow, and are seldom grooved, also being feathered with wood instead of feathers.

I should advise you to look in a large library and find "An Illustrated History of Arms and Armour" by Auguste Demmin, published in London in 1877 (since republished), in which you will find illustrations of both bows and quarrels of the several types. Or if you can find an edition of the collection of Lewellyn Meyrick of England. Dodd, Mead & Co. is arranging to soon publish a new book on "Weapons, Past and Present" by Messrs. Thompson,

Wiggin and myself, in which, if there is space enough after getting through with gunpowder weapons, I may take up the crossbow, with some illustrations.

If you desire to see or handle real crossbows, go in to Francis Bannerman's Sons, 501 Broadway, N. Y., and they will show you some. Or if you should desire to purchase an original one with goat's foot lever, bow stock being about thirty six inches long, and steel bow, forty inches wide, with original bow string and quarrel, such as was used in the fourteenth century, I can tell you where you can obtain a fine one in perfect condition for about $100.00.

The full statement of the departments, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

The Everglades

A GOOD place to go—if one is careful:

Request:— "I will thank you for your trouble if you can answer a few questions for me in regards to the Okeechobee Swamps of Florida. But before I ask these questions I will give you a little dope on myself so you will understand why I am thinking of going to the 'Glade Country.

I have always liked to hunt and fish and be in a place where I had room to turn around without getting in a fight or having a cop looking me in the eye. In other words I like to be in the open where I can have a little sport and enjoy the world the way God made it. Of course these places are getting few and far between in the good old U. S. A.

I know that I can not go in the swamps of Florida and make a bunch of jack or get by without working.

Now that I have told you a little about myself I ask you a few questions about the Everglades of Florida.

1. Are the Everglades of Florida a healthy place to live in?

2. Is there any Government land in the 'Glade Country in Florida or is it all owned by individuals or companies?

3. Can any of this land be homesteaded?

4. If this land can not be homesteaded would the Government or the parties who own this land have any objections to a fellow going in there and making a home for himself?

5. About how far would it be necessary to go from Lake Okeechobee to get a little land that does not overflow and where there is good hunting and fishing?

6. Do you think Miami is the best place to outfit from for a trip of this kind?

7. How are the Indians to get along with in the swamps?

8. Are there any towns around Okeechobee Lake where a good boat can be bought or would I have to buy one at Miami?

9. Here is my last question and most important one. Do you think a fellow with pleaty of—well, we will call it insides—can make a go of it in the Okeechobee Swamps of Florida?"—Sgt. ELMER HARVEY, Camp Benning, Ga.

Reply, by Mr. Liebe:—1—The 'Glades should prove healthful enough to a man who is already in good health to begin with—provided he observes the ordinary precautions; *i.e.*, keeps insects (notably the malarial mosquito) from biting him, drinks boiled water, eats good food and a sufficient variety, lets bad whisky strictly alone and doesn't get too chummy with good whisky!

2—A great deal of the 'Glades land (most of it is under water until it is drained) is owned by development companies; a great deal is free land; and some is owned by private parties.

3—There is land here and there adjoining the 'Glades that can be homesteaded, but it would likely be too far from markets; the clearing would be a big item, too, even if it didn't have to be ditched or underlaid with porous drain-pipe.

4—I believe the best way of answering this question is to tell you that you can go out a little from West Palm Beach or Miami, and buy a vegetable farm on 'most any kind of payments; and a farm of this kind should make you money and give you the opportunity to hunt and fish and enjoy the open. Five or ten acres properly cared for is better than twenty or thirty not properly cared for.

5—At some points, you can farm almost on the banks of Okeechobee; at other points, you would have to be miles from it.

6—Miami is a good place to outfit for this; so is West Palm Beach. But don't buy the first thing, in land or anything else, that is offered you. Investigate fully first—especially as to land. Good land down here often lies beside worthless land, and looks like it as well.

7—The Indians? If you can make friends with them. (They shy at white people, ordinarily: they say white men lie and steal—and, too, many of them do.) I say, if you can make friends with them, do so; you'll find them interesting. They won't hurt you. The one objection I have found to them is their untidy personal habits—that is, they don't think enough of the value of cleanliness.

8—Perhaps you could buy a boat at Okeechobee City. If not, you can buy one at Miami and run it up a canal to the lake.

9—Can a man with real insides in him make a go of it in the Okeechobee country? A man of that caliber can "make a go of it" anywhere! Growing winter vegetables is the big thing for making money. There is, too, a chance of making a living at commercial fishing either in Lake Okeechobee or on the coast.

Finally—Florida is a paradise in the matters of hunting, fishing, and climate. But a good living down here comes only by hard work, whether you are in vegetables, fishing, or growing citrus fruits. A climate like this is healthy for plant and fruit insects and diseases; it's a big job to keep things growing.

Sea-Serpents

IF YOU can't prove that they do exist, neither can you prove that they don't:

Request:—"Will you please tell me if there is any foundation for the myths and stories concerning sea monsters and gigantic sea serpents?

If there are any such things—aside from giant sharks, whales, octopus, rays, etc.—I would like very much to know where and by whom they were seen.

I'm enclosing a stamped and addressed envelope for your reply."—SAM WISEMAN, Gulfport, Florida.

Reply, by Capt. Dingle:—Who shall give a downright dictum on this subject? The trouble is, and probably always will be, that it is humanly impossible to reach the remotest deeps of the sea with any apparatus capable of bringing to light the greater mysteries of marine life. On land it is different. Until man penetrated to the uttermost regions of the earth, such things as giraffes, zebras, rhinoceros and so forth were regarded with awe and mild disbelief. People believed in fiery dragons and flying horses, but not in giraffes, etc. There have been a few reports of sea serpents met with at sea, from people above suspicion as regards their honesty. The fact that such things have not been seen again means little. The more awful part of marine life exists at such depths that it is only after some submarine cataclysm that these almost mythical creatures appear on the surface, and they return below as soon as they can, or die midway from readjusted pressure.

Personally I hesitate to disbelieve altogether in the big sea creatures. My own experience of such has been small, but one actual experience alone has caused me to go slow in regarding all such tales as you mention as fiction. I once saw a big sperm whale vomit the contents of his stomach in dying; and among the mess was a lump of giant squid tentacle that weighed sixty pounds and had suckers as big as teacups. The beast that it came from must have been a monster indeed. And I personally saw this fragment.

Tahiti

AIT'S a little more expensive to live there than it's on the other islands of French Oceana:

Request:—"Will you kindly give me some information concerning all the South Sea Islands mentioned in your section of *Adventure*? I would like to know as much as I can learn of all of these islands, especially French Oceania.

Can acreage be bought and would it be practical to go to one of these places with a small family with the object of making a home? Could you tell me what it would cost to buy a few acres in Tahiti?

Would it be practical to go there, or to some other island with three or four thousand dollars, expecting to buy a small place and engage in some kind of industry? Kindly give me all the information you can.

Please do not use my name if the question is published in *Adventure*."— ——, Tujunga, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. C. Brown, Jr.:—A few lines which will have to do with Tahiti and the adjacent islands of the Society group.

Under normal circumstances three or four thousand dollars gold will purchase a nice little plantation in Tahiti. On the neighboring islands, where the cost of living is not as great, this sum of money will even go farther. Indeed, it will remove a man and those depending on him out of the reach of want. Please keep in mind that his money will do this for him at a normal period. Of course, there are times when it is difficult to find the right thing, when there are no bearing plantations for sale. Then he must wait for his opportunity. This waiting eats up time and money.

Just now—in 1925—things *are not normal* in French Oceania. Over all the islands is inflation. And the land craze is on. Everybody is talking and wanting land—all because of green vanilla beans that have been bringing the grower $3.25 American a pound. Those who cured their beans received as much as $20.00 a pound. In the last year many young fortunes have been made by small growers.

What are the natives doing with their money? Throwing it away! A race is on to see who can spend the fastest. While those who did not grow vanilla are now mad for any kind of land that will produce this world luxury. The price means nothing. Will not this land yield them a fortune? they ask.

This is no time for the man from "above the line" to buy land in the Society Islands. A single acre sells for a young fortune now.

Hot Tamales

AITHERE are many more ways than one of preparing the favorite fruit of Mexico:

Request:—"I was delighted to get the Tamale Recipes, you gave to Mr. Reppletoe in a recent issue, and if it is not too much trouble, I beg you for the others you mention, which I would receive with much grateful appreciation."—MARIE L. THOMAS, San Diego, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Mahaffey:—TAMALES are a mixture of meat or fowl made hot with chiles and wrapped in cornhusks. In preparing the dough or *hixtamal*, unless scalded meal is used as a substitute, it is necessary to prepare the shelled corn with limewater. The Mexicans grind the corn prepared in this way, on the *metate* and instead of a mortar for the chile, use the *molcajete* and *lejolote*.

To prepare the corn, cover it with water, add the limewater, and boil until the husks slip off easily between the fingers, then wash in cold water until perfectly white. The limewater is made by adding an ounce of common lime to a quart of water, stir well and let settle, when clear, drain off the water for use. One quart of water prepared in this way will do for a pound of corn. For the wrapping, cut off the inside leaves of the cornhusks about an inch from the stalk end and boil in clear water until perfectly clean. Tear a few in narrow strips for use in tying the ends; dry the rest and rub them over with a cloth dipped in hot lard.

FARSANTA. Use equal quantities of cold boiled chicken and veal, and half as much ham, all chopped. Mix together and season with good gravy. Season with salt, cayenne, and a little chopped parsley. Make a dough by pouring a cupful of boiling water on a quart of fine, fresh cornmeal; work in a big lump of butter, and add water until like biscuit dough. Have ready, as directed, a pile of the soft inner leaves or husks of green corn. Take a lump of dough about the size of an egg; pat it out flat, put a tablespoonful of the meat on it and roll for the inner husk. Then put on the outer husks with a thin piece of dough in each. Tie the ends and boil in water containing a few red peppers and a piece of garlic.

GENUINO. Boil three quarts of whole corn in ash lye until the hulls come off; soak in clear water until the lye is all out, then grind. Remove the

seeds and veins from six chile peppers, boil soft, and then put through a colander to separate from the skin. Boil a chicken tender and set aside half of the well seasoned broth; the rest, with the chicken, thicken with part of the ground corn, and add the pepper pulp, and three tablespoonfuls of fine marjoram. For the batter, take the remainder of the broth and ground corn, and mix into it a tablespoonful of olive oil; season with salt and make the dough just thick enough to spread. These proportions will make 15 tamales.

HACIENDA. Grind two quarts of hulled corn in a meat chopper and mix to a paste with two tablesponfuls of butter, salt and cayenne. Divide a large, fat chicken and stew until tender, in water containing a clove of garlic, and a pinch each of salt, comino seed and marjoram. Scald two dozen dry chiles, remove the seeds and veins, scrape the pulp from the skins, add this to the chicken stew and thicken slightly with flour. Shape the corn-husks with scissors, and soak in warm water for an hour. Remove, dry and rub each with hot fat or lard. Fill one with the chicken stew, spread four others with the corn-paste; fold over the one containing the chicken, and roll the others around. Tie the ends with a strip of the husk and steam for two hours.

LAREDO'S CELEBERRIMO. Boil a pound of pork until two-thirds cooked; then grind it rather fine. Add a small amount of garlic, also a small quantity of seeded raisins and prepared almonds. Soak two and a half ounces of chiles in hot water; take out the seeds and veins, wash them well and grind fine, adding enough of the stock in which the meat is boiled to make a sauce, and strain. For the dough, use the ground corn prepared with lime-water; add six ounces of fresh lard to the pound, salt to taste and moisten with the meat stock. Have the husks prepared, spread each with a thin layer of dough, and for the center one, a tablespoon of the pork and a tablespoonful of the chile sauce. Roll carefully, tie the ends, and steam over the liquid in which the meat was boiled.

MESA REDONDA. Cover a four pound chicken with hot water and add four onions, a clove of garlic, a stick of cinnamon, ten whole allspice, three chile peppers and a tablespoonful of salt. Simmer until the chicken is tender, then remove and cut into small pieces. Strain the liquor, put the chicken meat into it, add enough yellow corn-meal to make a thick mush and boil ten minutes. Have ready the green corn cut from a dozen ears and two pounds of raisins, seeded, and mix these into the mush, with a half teaspoonful of cayenne pepper. Fill the center husk with a piece of the chicken and some of the mush, roll the others around, each spread with a tablespoonful of the mush. Tie at each end and boil an hour.

Other recipes are Viajero, Hot Tamal. I hope these will fill the bill.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address JOSEPH COX, *Adventure*, New York.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

PINER, JACK. Marie and Jeanne need you. We are willing to do anything to make things right. Wire immediately your whereabouts and everything.—Address NORMAN LOVEIT, Wichita, Kansas.

THOMPSON, PAUL GORDON. Last heard of at Christian Orphans Home, St. Louis in 1900 at the age of two years. Any information will be appreciated by his mother. Address MRS. FRANCES C. HOYLAND, 4631 N. Racine Ave., Chicago, Ill.

GILLESPIE, JAMES, JOHN AND MYLES. Left Toronto, Canada about forty years ago. Any information will be appreciated by their sister.—Address MRS. JAMES RYAN, 186 Geary St., Buffalo, N. Y.

WILLIAMS, ERNEST. Left his sister's home September 30, 1924. Last heard from in Louisville, Kentucky. Any information will be appreciated. Address MRS. GERTRUDE BERRY, 116 Shelton St., Clarksville, Tenn.

AUGUSTINE, MISS ELIZABETH. Left home 29 Howard St., Geneva, Ill., at 10:30 P.M. on Saturday, October 25, 1924 in her Overland touring car (Eng. No. 52374) (1924 Ill. State Licence plates No. 297-797). Last seen in Des Moines, Iowa about 10 A.M., Thursday, October 30, 1924 in her car with Robert (Bob) McManen in front of Hotel Millard. Brunette, height 5 ft. 8 inches, weight about 140 lbs., age 28 years, incline I to be somewhat quiet and reserved, experienced telephone operator and clerk. Any information will be appreciated by her anxious mother.—Address MRS. CHARLES AUGUSTINE, 29 Howard St., Geneva, Ill.

HOLMES, PERLEY (PUS). Insurance agent in Boston. Any information will be appreciated.—Address C. E. WASHBURN, P. O. Box 813, Portland, Maine.

BEALE, ARTHUR. Late of 73rd Battery R. G. A. India, 1905-1909 Delhi and Ferozepore. Alberta, Canada 1913. Please write to old Pard.—Address FRED HOLLAND, 10 Darrell Road, East Dulwich, London, Eng.

BLOOMENTHAL, JAMES. Last heard of in New Orleans, La. Any information will be greatly appreciated.—Address HENRY E. BARTH, 5341 Wyalusing Ave., Phila., Pa., or Harold Ruff, care of Radio Corp. of America, 35 S. 3rd St., Phila., Pa.

ANDERSON, JOHN HOWIE. Left London, England about 20 years ago. Last heard of about six years ago, when he was in Vancouver, B. C. working for the C. P. R. Have written to the C. P. R. and they tell me he left them almost the same time that he wrote me. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. FRANK WILLIAMS, 1553 Kilmer Road, Lynn Valley, North Vancouver, B. C.

RYAN, ERNEST W. Age 43, height about 5 feet 7 inches, brown hair, blue eyes, weight 180 lbs. Last heard from at Jacoma in 1918. Any information will be appreciated by his brother and sisters.—Address MRS. ADA RYAN, 60 Homewood Ave., Toronto, Ont., Can.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

FITZGERALD, LEWIS C. Why don't you write home? Your Aunt Cora and Sana are both here, we can't understand your silence.—MOTHER.

STAPLEY, JAMES. Last heard from in Great Falls and Fort Benton, Montana. Age 47 years, 6 feet tall. Any information will be appreciated by his cousin.—Address WILLIAM F. DESAUTELL, 124 Howard St., Buffalo, N. Y.

BRIGGS, CHARLES HARVEY. Known in American Federation of Labor for at least 35 years as Broadway Briggs. Last heard from he was in Houston, Texas. Age 69 years, large mustache. May be in Norfolk, Va. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address GRANT L. BRIGGS, 421 Chauncy St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

BOLAN, THOMAS. Irish descent. Age 48 years, light complexion, blue eyes. Known to friends as Irish. Any information will be appreciated.—Address BOB, care of *Adventure*.

THE following have been inquired for in either the July 20 or August 10, 1925, issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine.

ANDERSON, Harold; Atkinson, F. D.; Baldwin, Chas. or Joe Herbert; Card, Frank; Clarke, Corporal; Clark, Tom (slim); Culberson, Albert James; Harridge, Albert; Ingle, Horace; Johnson, Theodore, William, Oscar and Irene; McCarroll, Charles; Manuel, James; Norsworthy, Tom; Patdo, Alejandro; Schabarum, Leo P.; Stockman, Ed and Hardy; Van Heldren, T. C.; Vesper, Pvt. Otto; White, Dan; Zwinge, Henry J.; Arthur; Dewers, Jack, Marty McGee; Harriss, Arthur; E. S. J.; Happy Davis, Johnny Lisse, Jack "Sheik", Pollock and Harry Blackman; Luiz Shipp family; S. L. L.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

SEPTEMBER 10TH ISSUE

Besides the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

CASH JACK — ***Charles Victor Fischer***
When gobs gamble.

DAYS OF '49 A Six-Part Story Part IV — ***Gordon Young***
Yank was too good a man to die.

MEEKS — ***L. Paul***
The two partners were dangerous fighters.

THE CODE OF EAST AND WEST — ***Ralph R. Perry***
The Arab didn't understand.

THE MADNESS OF JOHN O'KEEFE — ***John Murray Reynolds***
It came when least expected.

FOR SERVICES RENDERED — ***Wilkeson O'Connell***
"I do not intend to obey that order!"

STILL FARTHER AHEAD

THE THREE ISSUES following the next will contain *long* stories by Talbot Mundy, H. Bedford-Jones, T. S. Stribling, Bill Adans, Harold Lamb, John Webb, Bruce Johns, Robert Simpson and Walter J. Coburn; short stories by Arthur O. Friel, Fairfax Downey, Alan Le May, Frederick J. Jackson, Captain Dingle, Alex. McLaren, David Thibault, J. H. Greene, Theodore Seixas Solomons, Raymond S. Spears, H. S. Cooper and others; stories of Romans in ancient Britain, American detectives in the West Indies, forest runners in old France, apprentice seamen on the high seas, aviators in the Bolshevik country, cowboys on the Western range, pearl hunters in the South Seas, soldiers, sailors and adventurers all the world around.

Why Did Pirates Wear Whiskers?

In days of old the Pirate bold feared the razor far more than the cutlass. The swashbuckling ferocity that so successfully terrorized his enemies had disastrous results when applied to his own face.

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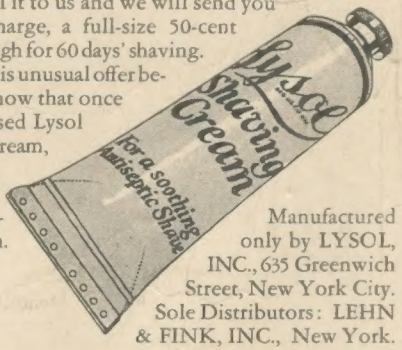

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